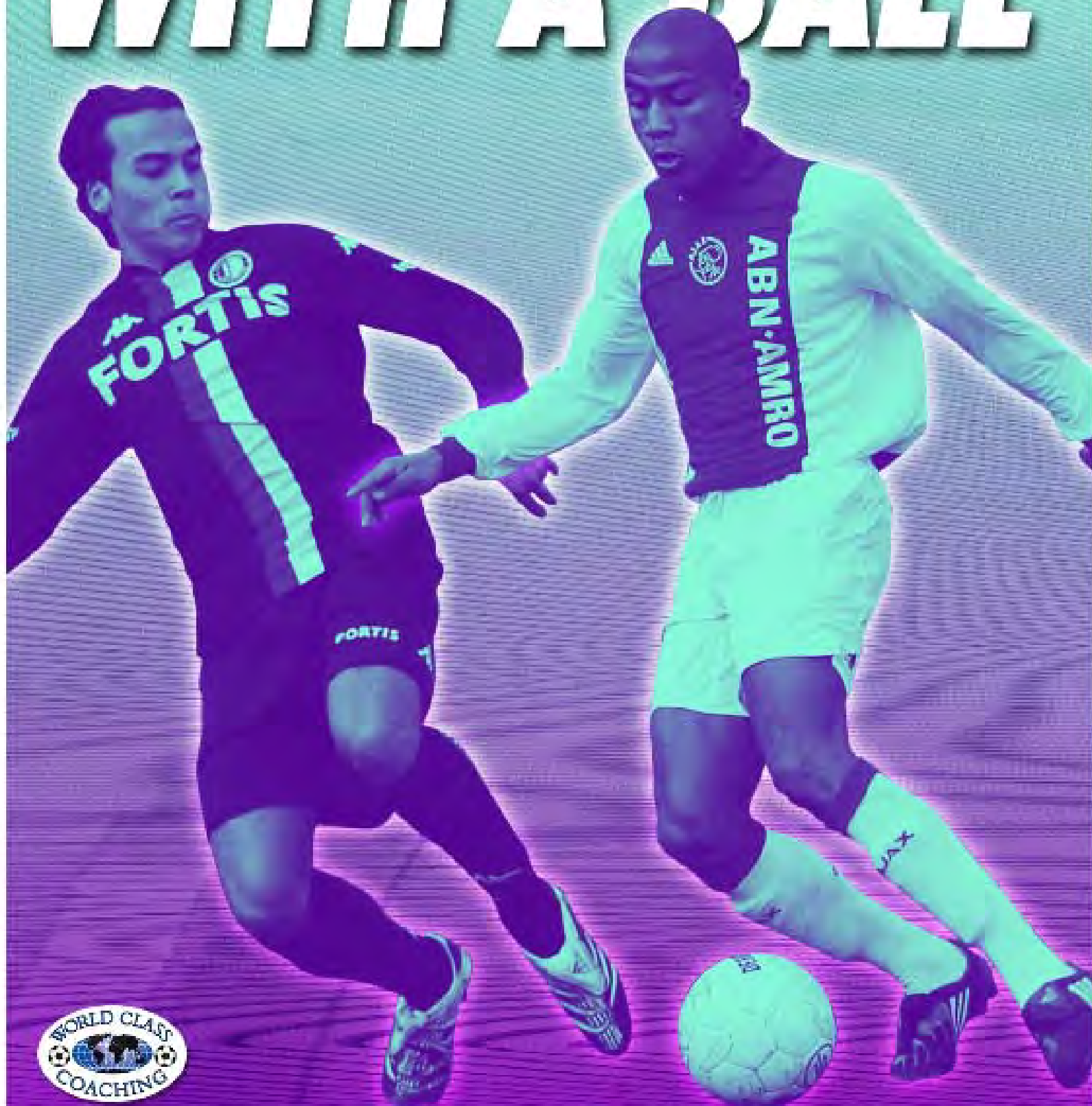


# SOCCER CONDITIONING

# WITH A BALL



**WORLD CLASS  
COACHING  
Conditioning  
Drills and Exercises**

*Published by*

**WORLD CLASS COACHING**

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Edited by Tom Mura



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## Introduction

This eBook is a collection of conditioning drills and exercises from WORLD CLASS COACHING. They focus on global conditioning activities that combine conditioning with technical and tactical topics to make each session as economical as possible.

Pioneered by **Gus Hiddink** with the Russian national team and **Jose Mourinho** at every championship winning club he's managed, global training is fast making running around cones 'old hat'. This innovative approach to conditioning includes technical, tactical and conditioning elements so you can gain more from every training session.

Soccer is one of the most demanding sports in the world. Players will run on average 10 km every game and if you want them to perform at their optimum level, it's vital that your players stay in shape.

Fitness training is a vital part of a coaching program. But spending a session running around cones or going for long distance runs swallows up time your players could be spending with the ball improving their technical abilities.

We all have a limited amount of time with our players so it's important to maximize the benefit of each training session. The drills and exercises cover a wide variety of topics from 1 v 1 Encounters to overlapping runs for a Full Back.

## Improving Skills and Moves needed for 1 V 1 Encounters While Developing Multiple Components of Soccer Conditioning

Being able to take a player on 1 v 1 is an important and beneficial quality for soccer players of any playing position. For the attacking player to be successful in 1 v 1 encounters, they must be able to beat the defender with a change of pace or by using a variety of moves and fakes to get around them. Players therefore need to be comfortable and confident at performing different moves, and doing so at speed.

Today's activity will focus on teaching/practicing various moves and skills using an individual dribbling training format. We have also modified the exercise so that we can target a number of conditioning parameters that are necessary for soccer athletes.

### Set-up and Design:

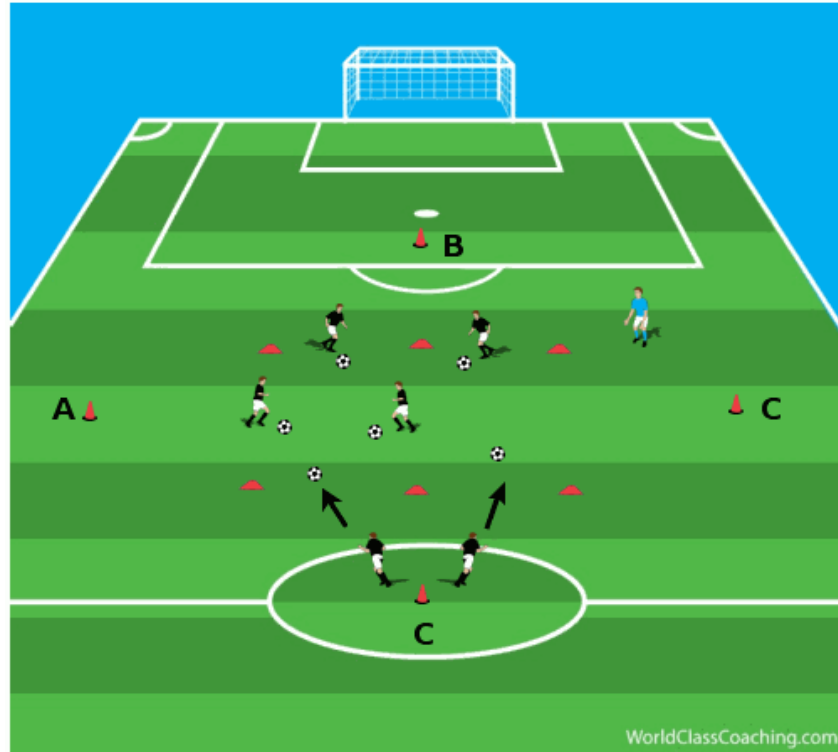
This exercise uses the space between the top of the 18-yard box and the half-way line for the playing area. Begin by setting up a 20 yard by 20 yard grid in the centre of the playing area. Place a small pylon 10 yards away from the middle of each side of this 20 by 20 grid. Give each cone a letter. Divide your players into pairs and give each group a different number. Have each Player dribble around inside this area performing a specific move (scissors, Ronaldinho, Stanley Matthews, etc.) as quickly as possible but under control (Figure 1).

(For simplicity, we have only used 6 players in the illustrations. However, you will likely have between 10 to 14 players when you choose to do this activity, which means 5 to 7 groups of two.)



After a few seconds, the coach will call a specific number as well as the letter of one of the four cones. The pair whose number has been called will leave their balls in the grid and sprint as quickly as possible to the specified cone, touch it, and then sprint back to their ball (Figures 2 and 3). As soon as they get back, have them continue dribbling.





Have another pair go as soon as the first pair returns to the grid. After each group has performed 2 sprints (should take no more than 2 to 3 minutes) have the squad rest for 90 seconds and then repeat the sequence. Perform a total of 3 to 4 sequences. However, ensure you change the move they practice while dribbling after each 3 minute sequence.

This activity targets a number of different conditioning elements including starting speed, acceleration, and aerobic endurance. You can make it more competitive and fun by having the partner who enters the grid last do 10 push-ups (or something similar) before continuing to dribble.

**Variation:**

You can vary this exercise in a number of ways. You can begin by having the players dribble their ball (instead of sprint) to the specified cone and back (Figure 4).





You can also have the players sprint to the cone and back twice. This will also increase the intensity of the activity.

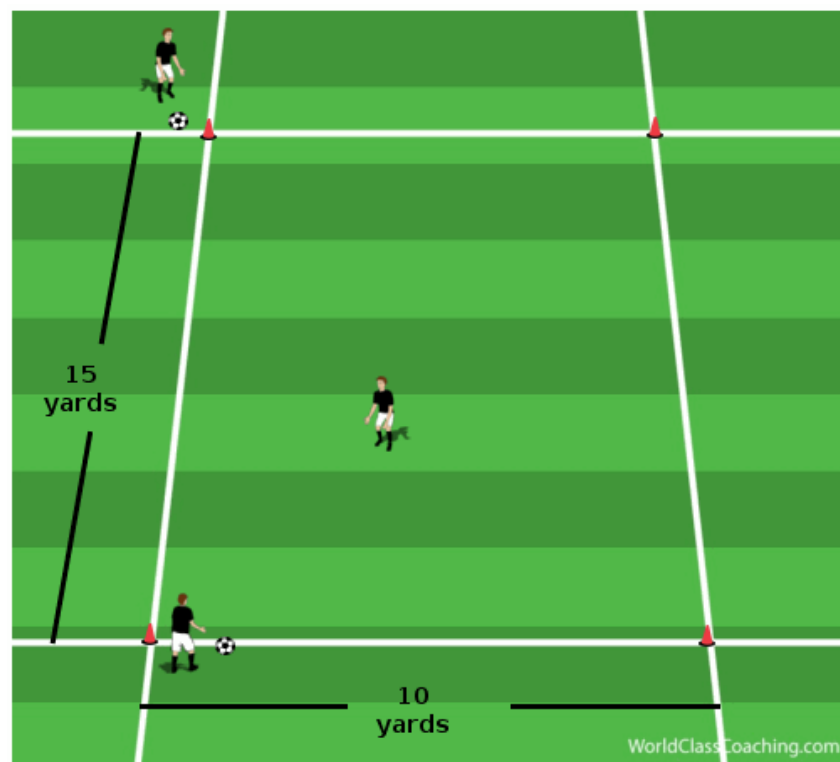
Lastly, you can incorporate different type of movement patterns that the players perform as they travel to the cone and back. For example, you can have them sprint to the cone and then backpedal as quickly as possible until they reach back to the grid.

## A Simple Exercise to Develop Short Passing Ability, Speed Dribbling Technique, Starting Speed and Anaerobic Capacity

Today's exercise is a simple exercise that focuses on speed dribbling, short passing and sprinting over short distances. We have also structured the exercise so that the work-to-rest ratio used targets the player's anaerobic capacity.

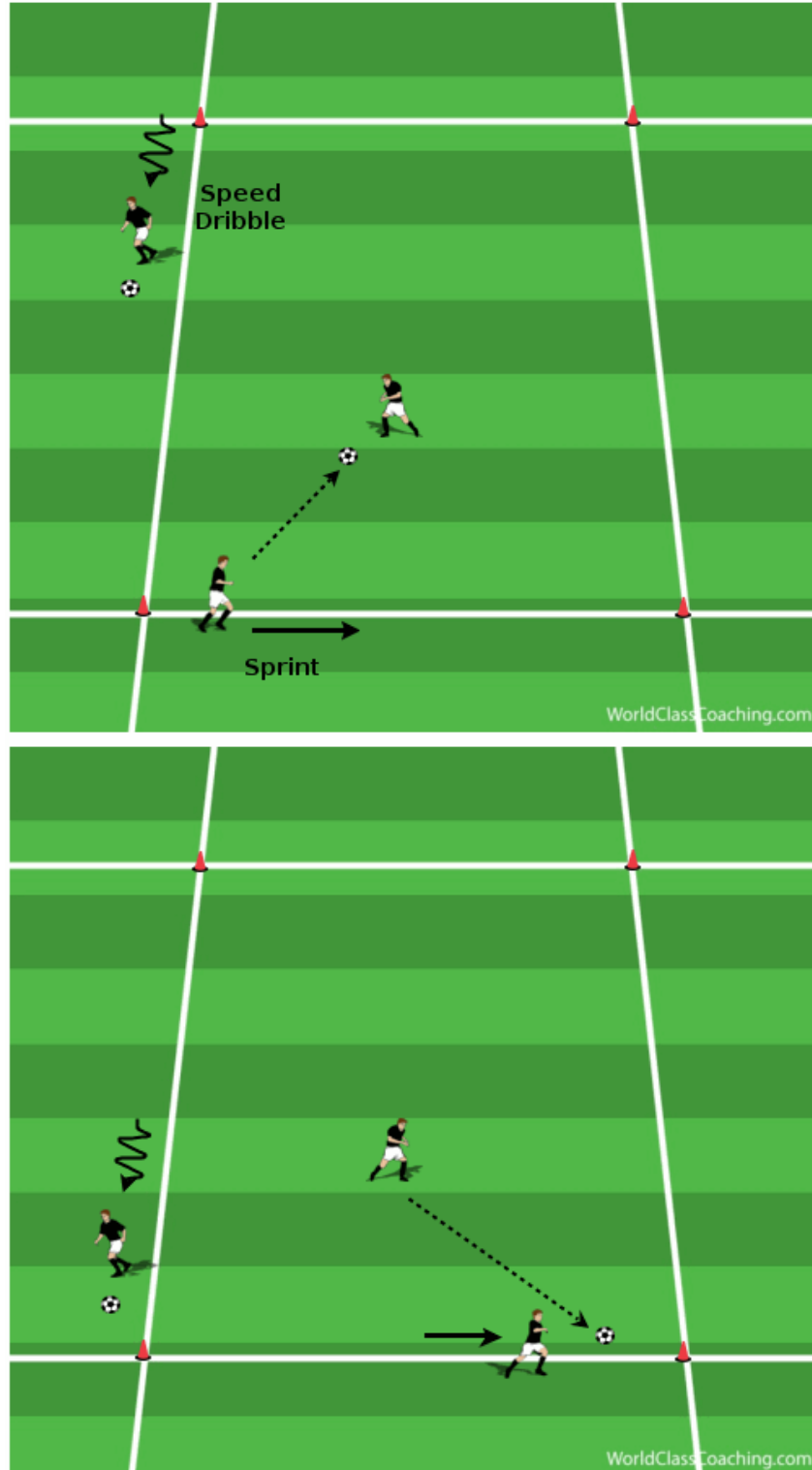
### Set-up and Directions:

Divide your players into groups of three. For each group, set up a 15 by 10 yard rectangular grid. Have one of the three players stand in the centre of the rectangular grid. Give the other two players a ball each and have them stand on the corners of one of the long sides of the rectangle (See Figure 1).

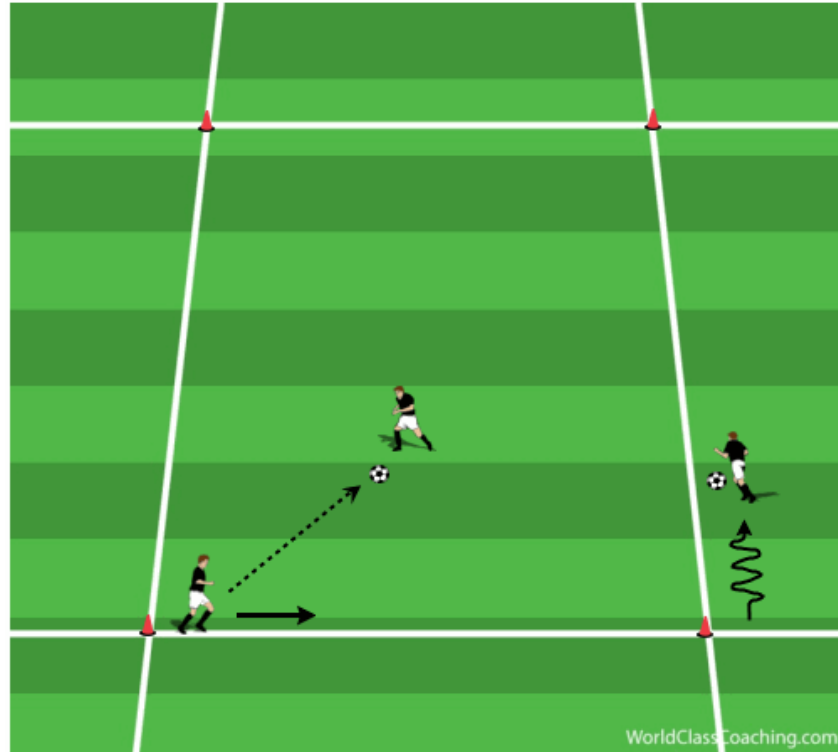


Play is initiated with the player at the bottom of the rectangle dribbling as quickly as possible, but under control until they reach the corner of the grid. At the same time, the player at the top of the grid plays a pass to the player in the centre of the grid and then sprints towards the edge of the grid on the other side. The player in the centre will return the pass into the path of the sprinting player who should attempt to control it before they reach the edge of the grid (See Figures 2 and 3).

Note: both players go in a clockwise direction.



When both player reach the opposite end on the side of the grid where they started, have them perform the reverse action. That is, players are always speed dribbling along the long side of the grid and performing a wall pass with the player in the centre of the area when they are on the shorter sides (Figure 4).



Continue this sequence for 90 seconds and then have the players rest for 60 to 90 seconds. After each sequence, have the player in the middle switch with one of the outside players. Ensure all players perform a total of 3 to 4 sequences.

### Coaching Points:

- When dribbling, Players must do so as quickly as possible but under control. Have them use the outside of the foot or laces as they make contact with the ball
- Ensure quality (accurate and well weighted) passes from the players when they are performing the wall pass. In addition, encourage the player on the outside to cover the 10-yard distance as quickly as possible
- Ensure the inside player is always aware of where both players are and move into position quickly to receive each pass.

### Variation:

You can vary this exercise by having the outside player who initiates the wall pass do so with the outside of the foot instead of the inside. You can also have them perform a single step over before playing the pass. You can also vary the exercise by having the dribbling player perform a specific skill or move while dribbling.

Be sure to vary the direction (clockwise and counter clockwise) after every sequence.

## **Finishing and Anaerobic Conditioning through 1v1 Battles**

### **Agility, Speed, 1v1 Battles and Composed Finishing by Daniel Severn**

For this week's article I'd like to share an exercise that helps to create competition in practice whilst focusing on some key aspects of the game; agility, speed, strength and finishing – all under match-like pressure. This is a great exercise that can be adjusted to suit all age groups and abilities.

To start the exercise I will offer a reward for the winning team. I have found differing rewards will help motivate different age groups/genders. A simple reward that works with 'most' ages can be taking a 1-0 lead into the scrimmage.

I like to offer rewards for winning team games as extra motivation for the players. Finding the right motivation can really help to push the players that extra step with their work rate, and therefore, their conditioning.

Using team challenges in sessions helps to create real competition between the players (something which is difficult to replicate from match day). Having competition between team mates will guarantee to get all players working 100%. This particular exercise will have the whole team cheering; motivating each other and working at flat out speeds. The agility and short sprints adds a great dimension, the players are so focused on the battle to get to the ball first that they don't think about the work they have to do to get there!

#### **Set Up and Directions:**

You will need to make two teams and designate one Goalkeeper. Both teams will work towards the same goal.

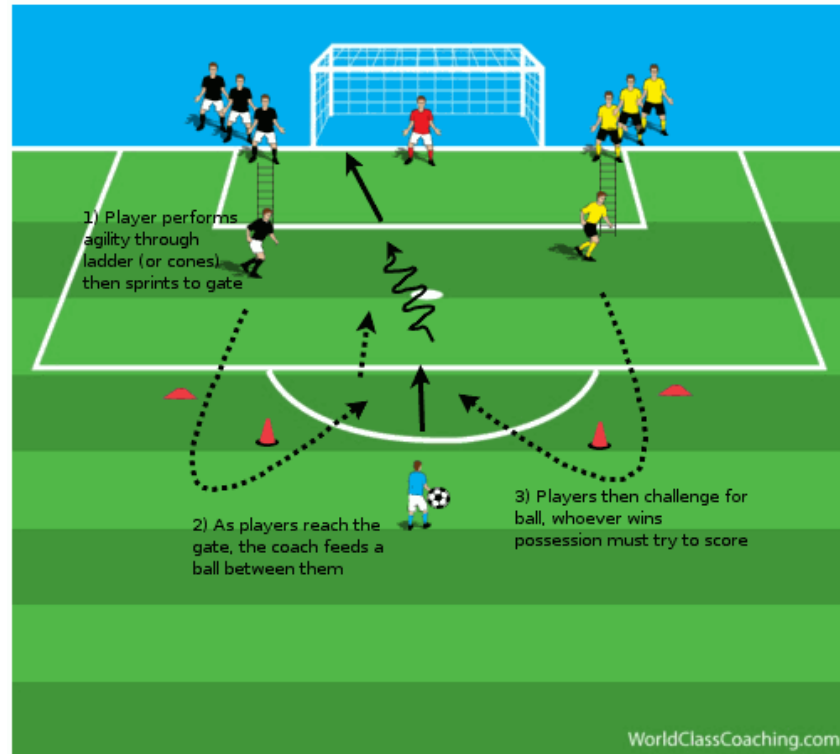
Line up the teams on either side of the goal. Set up two gates (each 2 cones approx 3 yards apart) just outside the penalty box, directly in front of where the teams start. Place an agility ladder (or cones) in front of the first player in each line.

The coach positions themselves directly between the two gates with a set of soccer balls.



On the coaches' call (or whistle) the front player from each line will use quick feet to maneuver through the agility ladder and sprint to the gate. As the player approaches the gate, the coach plays a short pass directly between the two players.

At this point, the two players will compete for possession and the winner of the battle will try to score. The player who didn't originally win possession will still apply pressure to try and steal the ball back and score himself – this way you will keep the situation match-realistic for the striker who will be shooting with close pressure from a defender.



Play continues until the ball goes out of play, or the GK has possession.

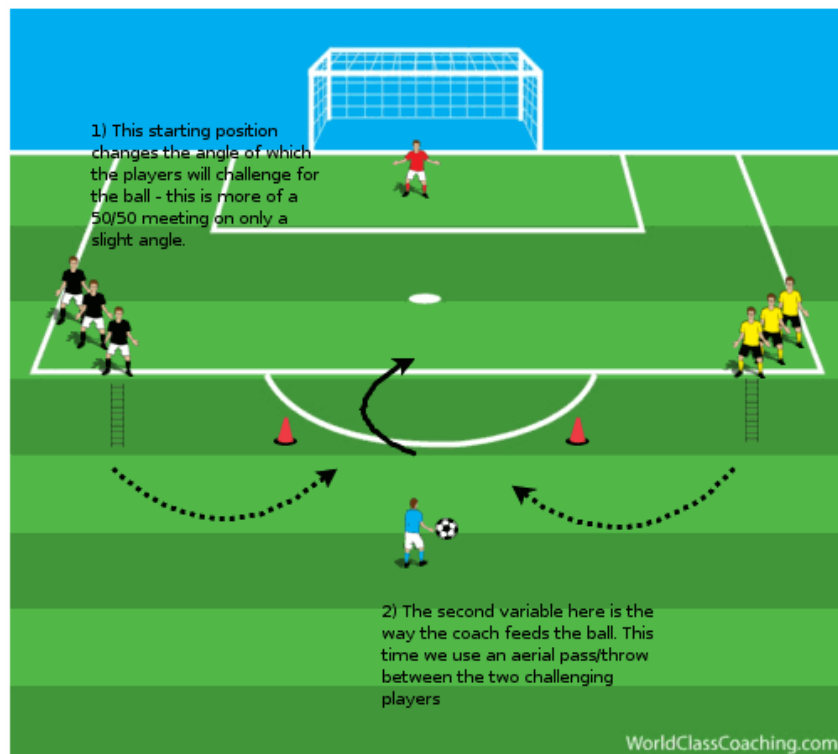
To increase the intensity you can run a 'quick-fire round' which means as soon as the ball is played in for the first 1v1, the next pair sprint out to begin their 1v1. Adding a time limit onto each play helps here to keep the rotation smooth – 5-7seconds is usually suitable to cover the short distance and quick shot.

Ensure to encourage quick feet through the agility ladder and a full sprint through to the gate, remind the players that the ball is released as soon as the first player gets to the gate – therefore the harder they push themselves to win the initial race, the better chance they will give themselves of winning possession and scoring for their team.

Using two teams in this situation and keeping track of the score, or offering rewards for the winners, helps to add pressure to scoring, much like the players will find in the real game situation. This helps with composure in front of goal on game day as you have put the players in that situation many times by running this exercise.

#### **There are many variables with this exercise:**

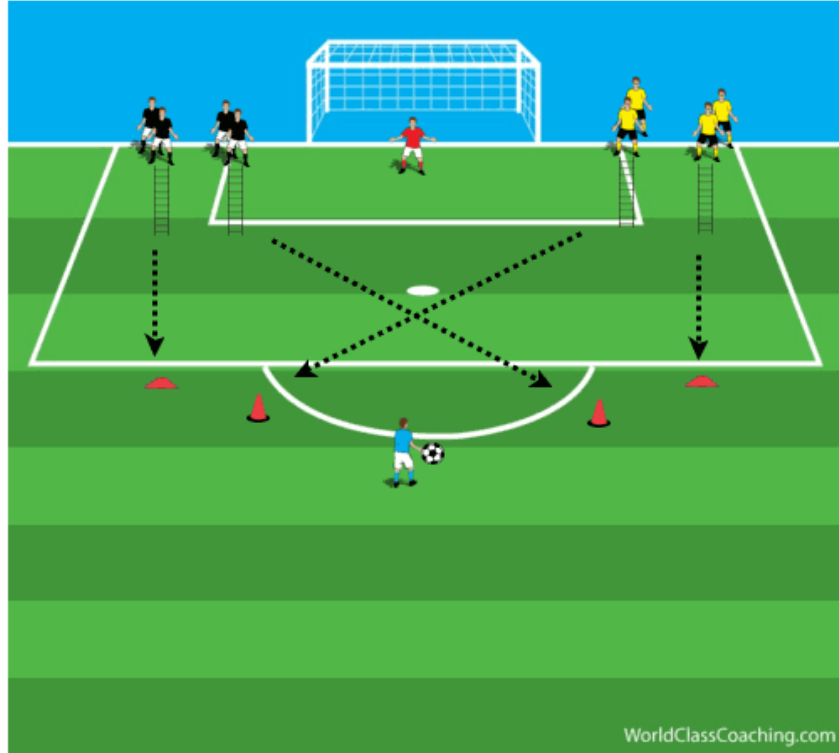
- The starting position of the players (stood up, facing backwards, crouching, lying down etc)
- Area of the field (Start by the goal, start on the corner of the box, start from the half way line)
- Type of ball played to players (soft pass to the middle, favor one side, aerial pass/throw)



Again, this exercise can be adjusted for different levels and ages. You can also easily adjust the numbers of this game. I have often played 1v1 and then progressed to a 2v2 and 3v3 in this situation.

When adding more players to the equation, the variables continue: start position and the way the players run to the gate (e.g. one straight, one diagonal) are good things to adjust.





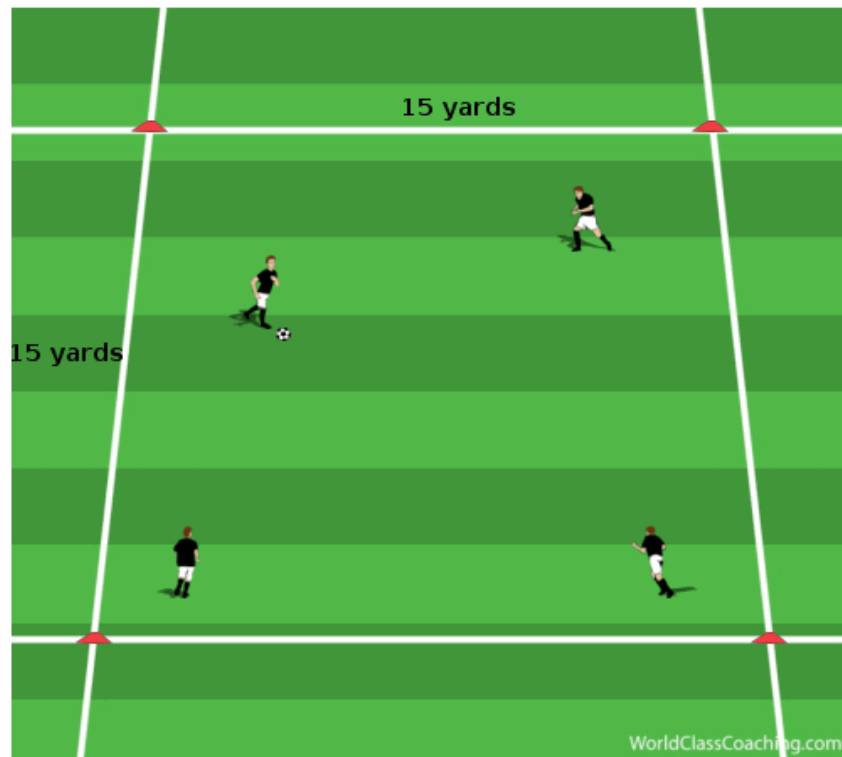
Challenges are the key to creating competition. With competition comes a natural work rate and desire to win. That work rate and desire to win can only result in improved conditioning with this kind of set up.

## Anaerobic Endurance Whilst Working on Passing and Moving

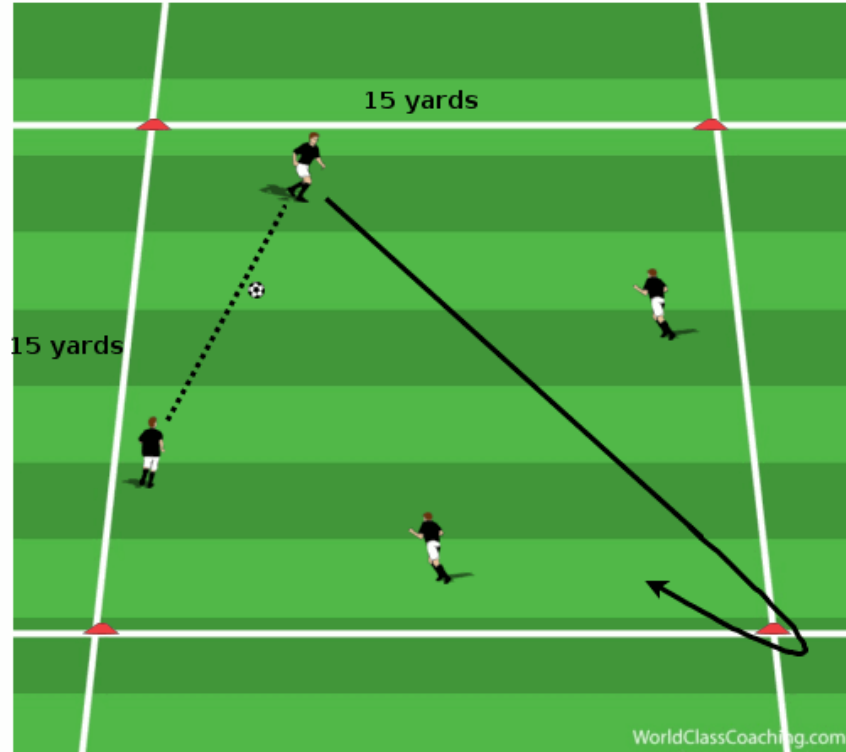
I use this regularly during my warm up not only to work on my player's fitness but also to get them passing and moving, getting them in the right frame of mind at the start of a practice. Sprinting over short distances is seen constantly during a game of soccer and this exercise works on this as well as the passing technique of your team.

### Set up and directions:

Set up an area 15 x 15 yards with 4 cones in the corners. You will need 4 players per square with 1 ball (figure 1). You can set this up multiple times depending on your squad size.



The exercise is a simple passing and moving exercise in the square but after every pass, the player who passes the ball must sprint to and around the furthest cone away before they can touch the ball again (figure 2).



### **Coaching Points:**

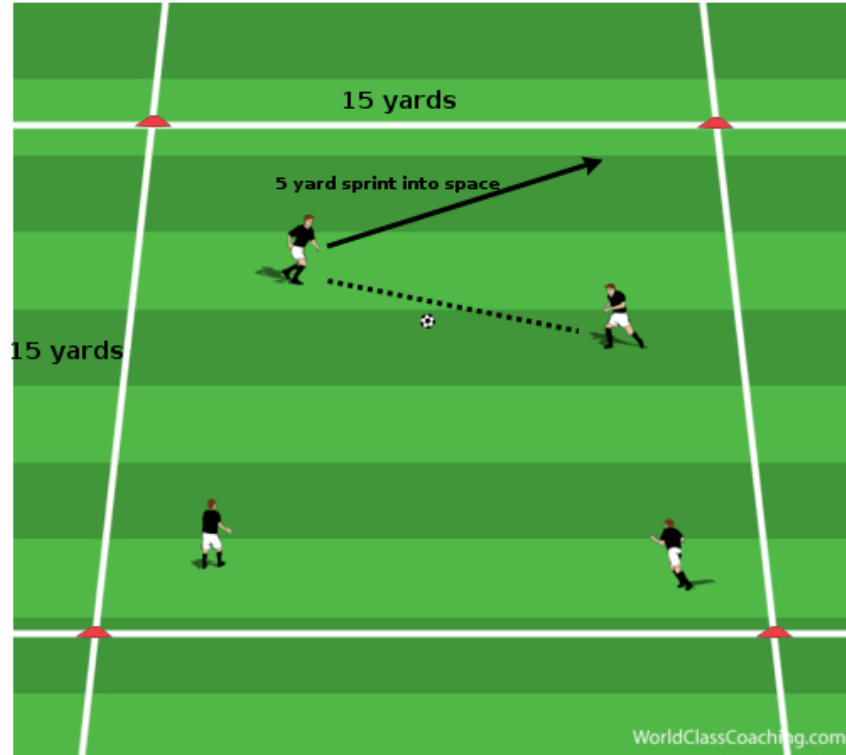
This exercise is meant to be performed at a high intensity so it is important to ensure that the players are sprinting after every pass.

Ensure that the players are using the correct passing technique (inside of the foot).

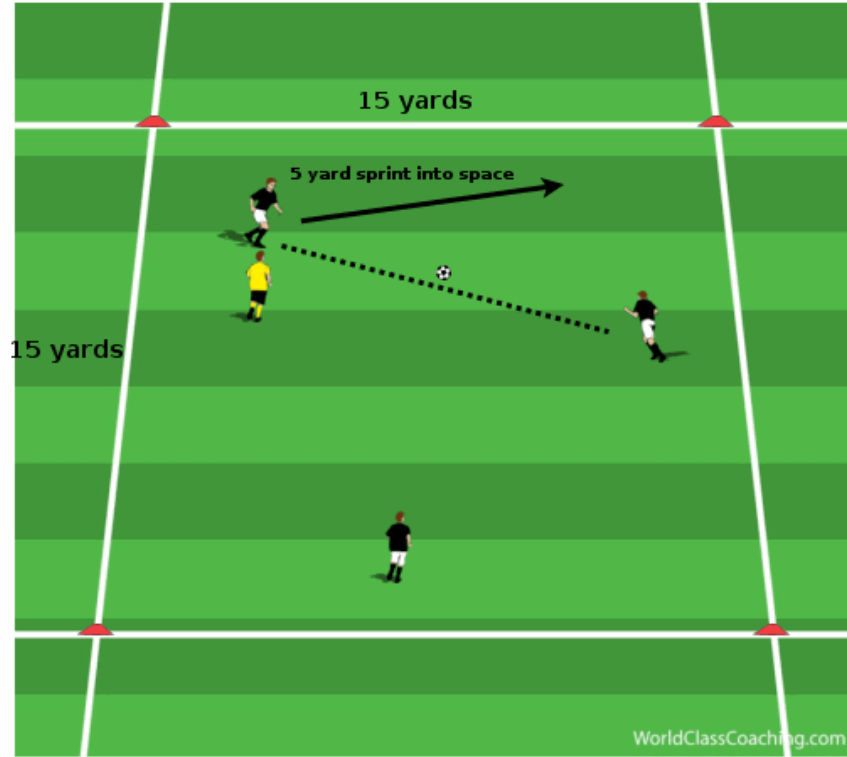
It is important that the players keep possession of the ball in the square throughout. Looking up is crucial in order to see who is available to pass to and who is coming back into the square after they go around a cone. Verbal communication is also important to be able to achieve this.

### **Progressions:**

To progress this exercise, rather than sprinting around the furthest cone away, after the player passes the ball they must sprint for 5 yards into any space in the square. With this you can start to encourage the give and go, making the exercise more realistic (figure 3).



You can now add a defender making a 3v1 in the square. Again after every pass the player must sprint for 5 yards into space. This movement can cause some confusion for the defender as they will not know whether to follow the sprinting attacker who will be looking for the give and go or to go to the ball (figure 4).



## Anaerobic Endurance of a Recovering Defender

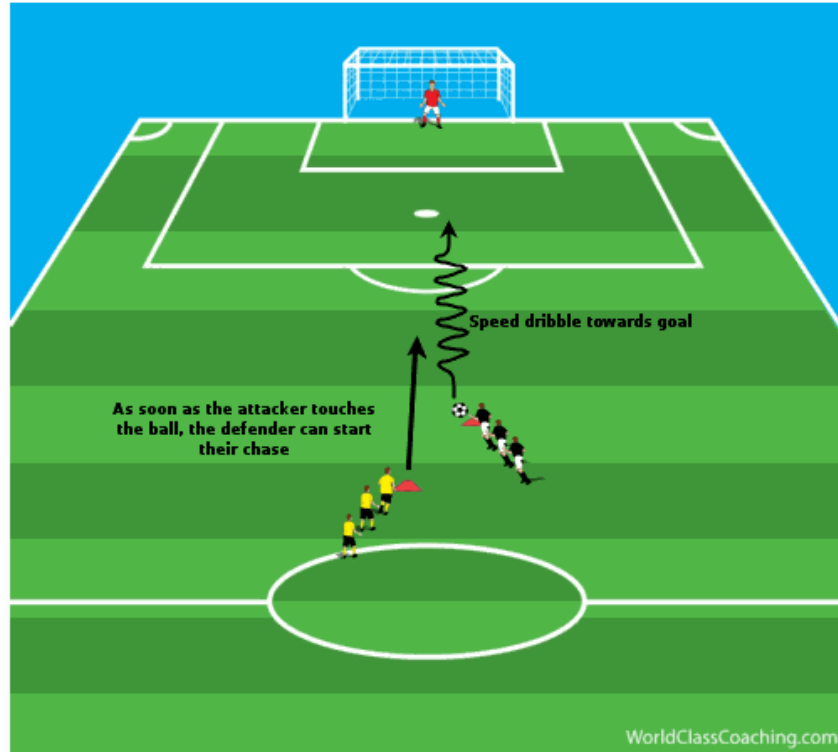
This week's exercise is designed to simulate a breakaway with a defender sprinting back to stop the attacker from scoring. This is a great exercise as not only does it work on the anaerobic fitness of the defenders but it is also a situation that the defender is very likely to face at some point during scrimmages or games. It is important to add an incentive for the defender in this exercise as they have to work very hard in this.

### Set up and directions:

The attacker starts 40 yards away from goal with a ball and the defender starts 10 yards further back to the left or right of the attacker. You will also need someone in goal. The distances suggested can be modified depending on the ages of the players. For younger players, you can bring the distance in closer to goal and for older players you can push the starting point of the attacker to the halfway line, again with the defender starting 10 yards further back than the attacker (figure 1).



The exercise starts as soon as the attacker touches the ball. This is the cue for the defender to start chasing the attacker down and stop them from taking a shot on goal. The attacker's aim is to dribble towards goal as quickly as possible and try to score before the defender catches up to them (figure 2). As soon as one pair have finished, make sure the next pair are ready to go straight away to keep the intensity of this exercise high.



### **Progression:**

To progress this exercise, you can put the recovering defender in a slightly different situation. The setup is now the same but with a defender that starts 20 yards away in front of the attacker. The role of the recovering defender is now not to pressure the attacker but to get into a position where they can cover the first defender who is going to apply pressure from the front. If the first defender gets beat then the recovering defender needs to be there to stop the attacker from scoring (figure 3).

### **Variations:**

This exercise can be varied by starting the attacker and defender from different parts of the field. In the diagrams above, the attacker and defender start straight in front of goal but you can vary this and have them start from an angle and from different distances away from goal.



If you have the luxury of a full field you can set two of these exercises up to run at the same time. A good way to make sure that the defenders and attackers are working as hard as possible throughout is to split your squad into 2 teams (or 4 depending on if you can set this exercise up on another part of the field to run at the same time) and let both teams have a go as the attacker and defender. Keep score of the number of times the defenders stop the attackers from scoring during a set period of time. The recovering defender is the main focus of this exercise so I would reward the defenders by giving points for every time they stop the attackers from scoring. I would ignore the number of goals that the attackers score and keep encouraging the defenders to work hard.

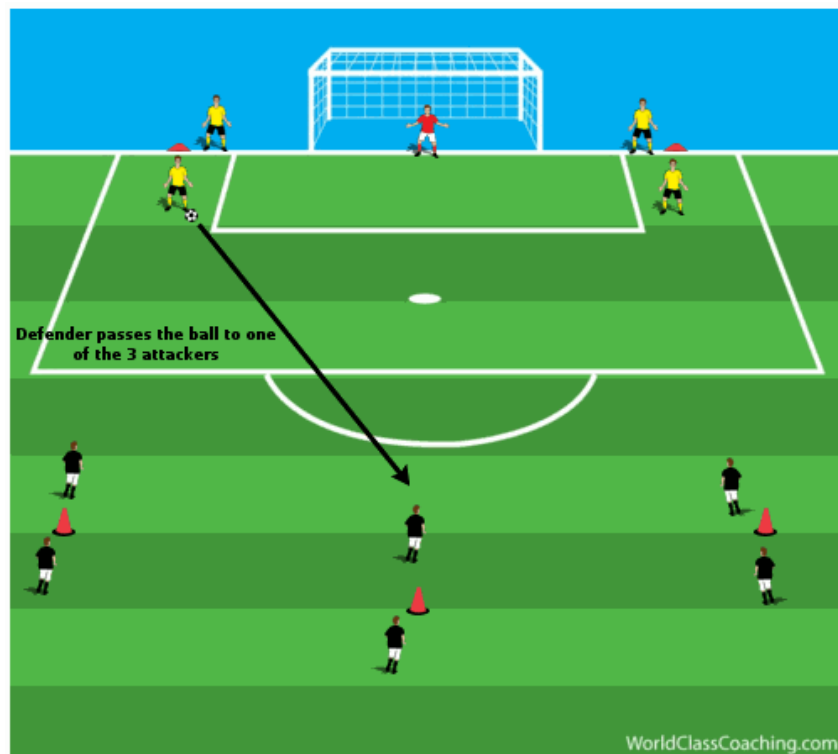


## Working on Defenders Endurance in a Numbers Down Situation

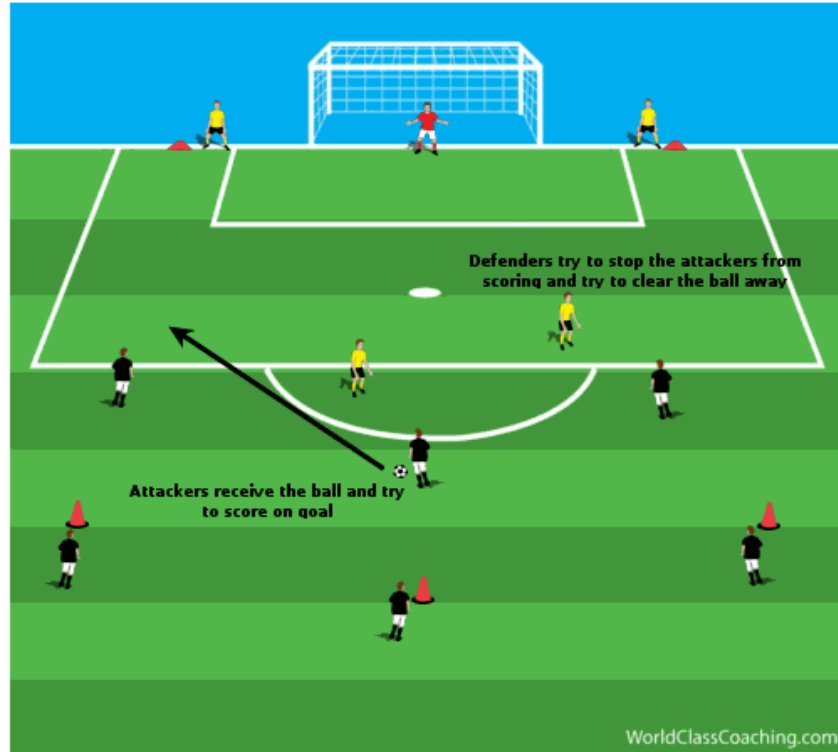
This exercise starts with 3 attackers in a large triangle shape around 25 yards out from goal and 2 defenders that start either side of the goal (figure 1). The idea of this exercise is to get the defenders working as hard as possible, which is why they are in a numbers down situation. To keep this exercise at a high intensity, make sure that there are a number of balls ready for the defenders to pass into the attackers. This will speed up the exercise and keep the defenders working at maximum intensity. This also puts the attackers and defenders in a real situation that they are likely to face in a game. Award the defenders points for stopping the attackers from scoring a goal, this will provide them with an incentive to work hard, especially for the younger age groups.



The defenders start with the ball and pass the ball to one of the attackers. Make sure that the defenders alternate, which attacker they pass the ball to in order to have the defenders face a different situation every time (figure 2).

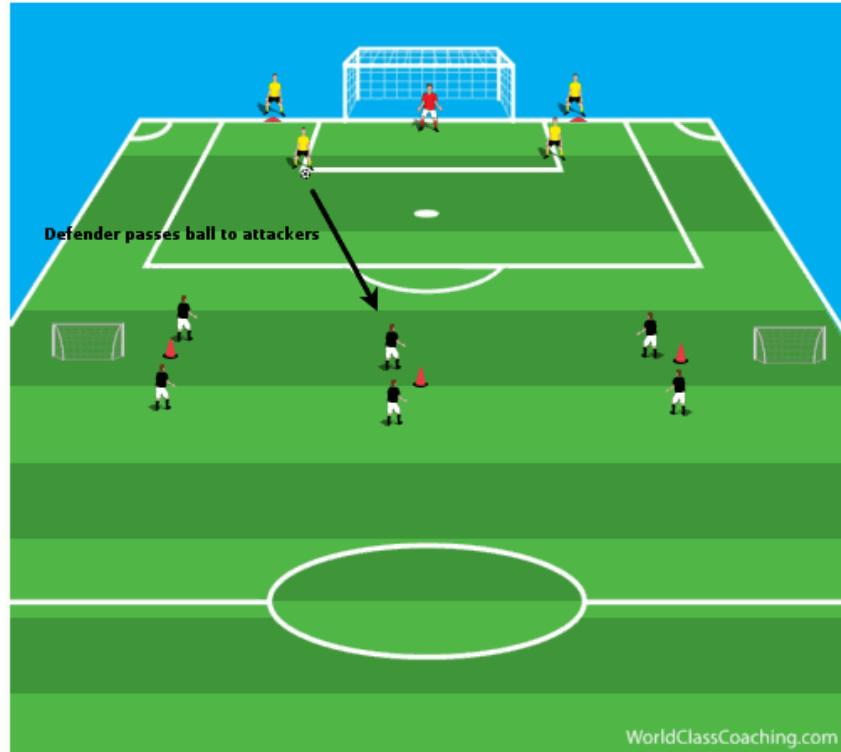


The two defenders close the ball down quickly to try and stop the attackers from scoring. Closing the ball down quickly is essential in order for the defenders to be successful in this exercise. By closing down quickly, the defenders can limit the space that attackers have and keep the attackers as far away from goal as possible. The defenders sprinting out to close down the ball will ensure that this exercise is done at a high intensity and so work on their endurance. The aim of the defenders is to clear the ball away from danger (figure 3).



**Progression:**

The set up for the progression is the same but with 2 small goals out wide on the right and left in line with where the attackers start. It is important for them to understand that they have another option in this situation, which is to keep the ball and pass it out (figure 4).



The defenders still earn points by stopping the attackers from scoring but now they can earn an extra point by winning the ball back and passing it into the small goals out wide. This is just like the defenders winning the ball back and passing it out wide to their team mates like a full back or wide midfielder (figure 5).

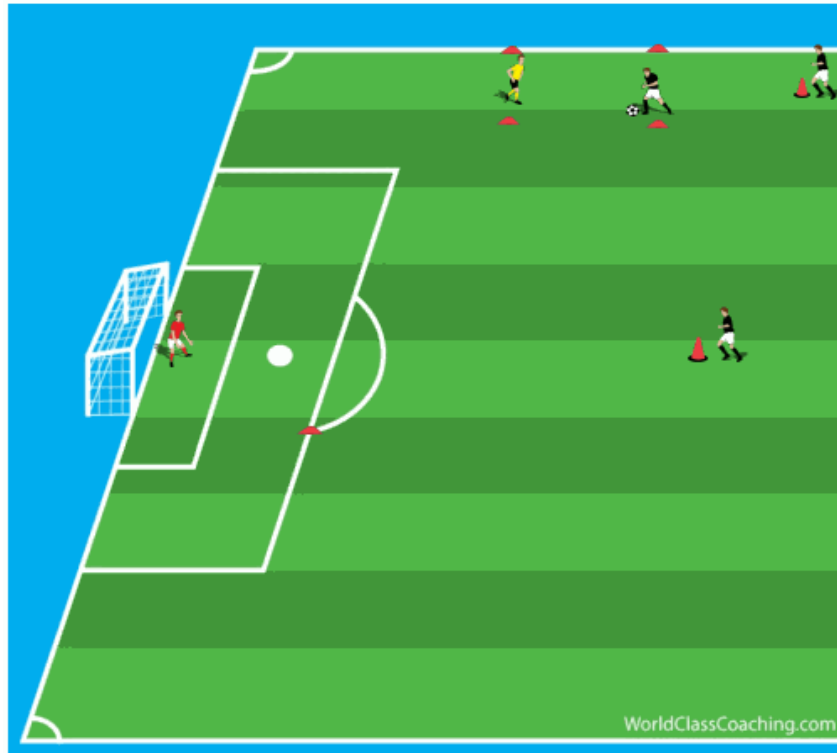


**Variations:**

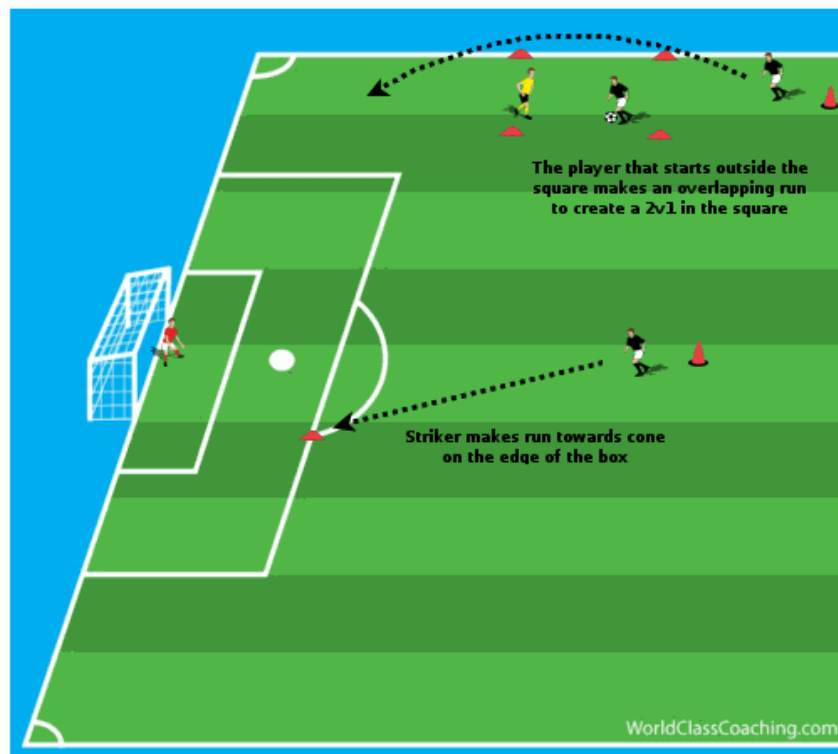
This exercise can be adapted to different numbers (2v1, 3v1, 4v2, 4v3) as long as the defenders are in a numbers down situation. This ensures that the defenders have to work hard to win the ball back. Not only do the defenders have to sprint out to close the ball down and keep the attackers as far away from goal as possible, but they also have to worry about the extra attacker and close that player down if they are passed the ball.

## Working on Anaerobic Endurance and the Overlapping Run for a Full Back

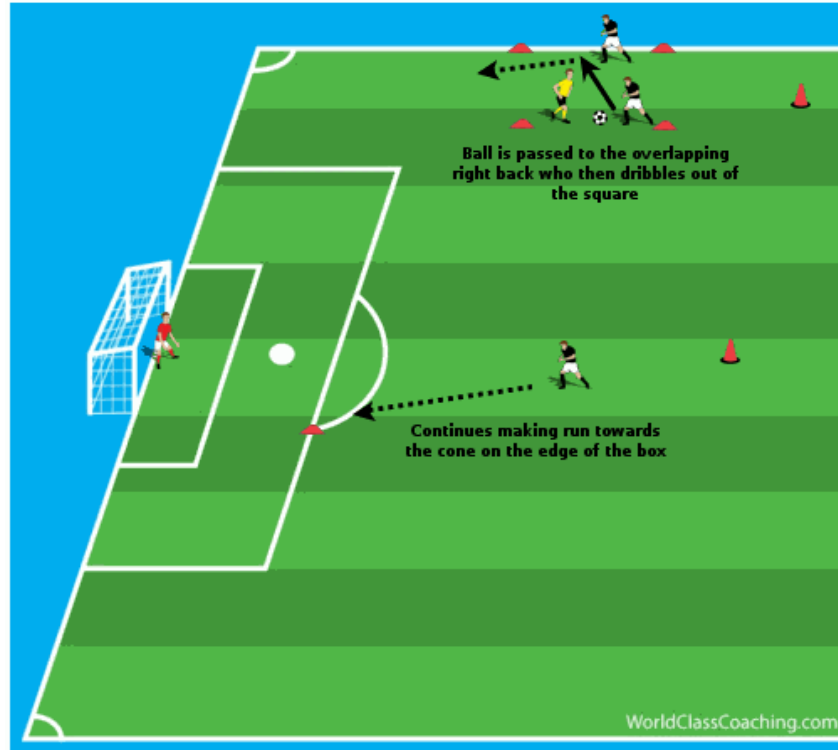
This article works on the anaerobic endurance of the right or left back in an attacking situation. Overlapping is something that is extremely important for a right or left back to be able to do because their role is not only to defend, but also to attack when the opportunity arises. Figure 1 below shows the set-up of the exercise.



A 10x10 square is set up around 25 yards from the end line out on the right hand side of the field and. This is where the exercise will start with a 1v1. A second attacker starts around 10 yards behind the 1v1 square and sprints forward into the square to support their team mate. This creates a 2v1 with an overlapping run (figure 2).

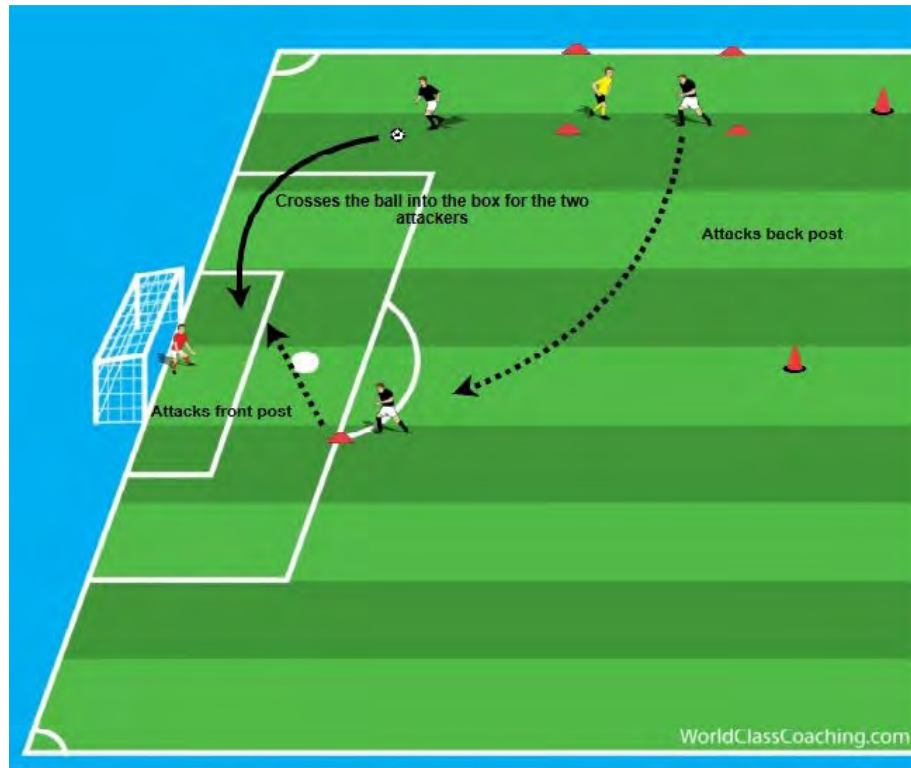


The idea is that the ball is passed to the full back on the overlap, who then dribbles out of the square. Once the right back dribbles out of the square, the defender is not allowed to track back and pressure the right back. While this happens in the 10x10 square, the 3rd attacker that starts around 25 yards out makes a run towards the cone on the edge of the 18 yard box (figure 3).



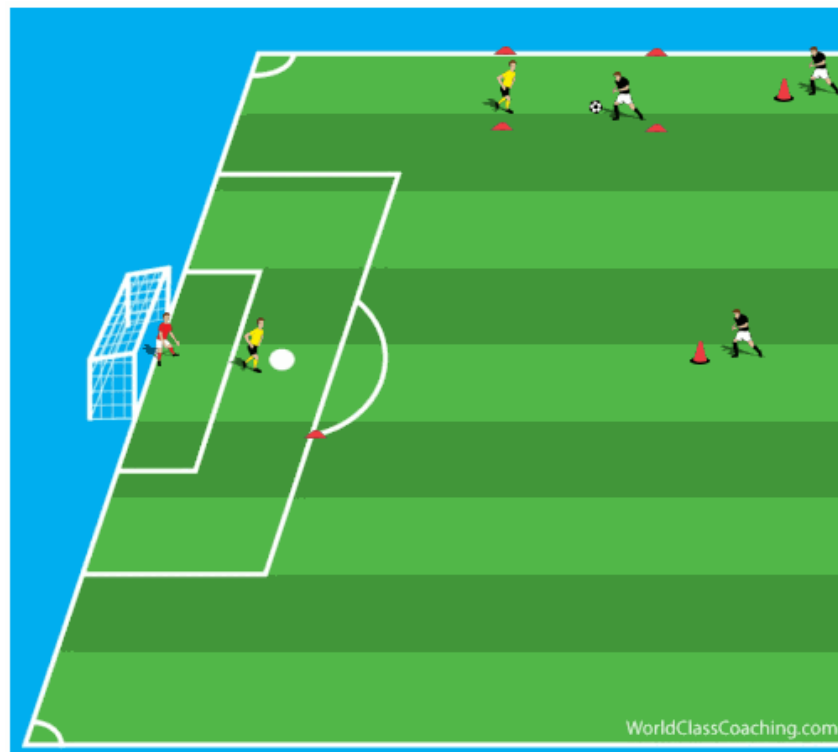
The attacker who initially started the 1v1 now attacks the back post. Once the right back has dribbled out of the square they dribble to the right hand right of the box and will have two attackers to aim for, one making a run to the back post and the attacker who ran towards the small cones on the edge of the 18 yard box who will now attack the front post (figure 4). When the attackers make their runs toward the front and back posts, it is important they sprint towards them in order to lose a defender that in a real game would be tracking them.



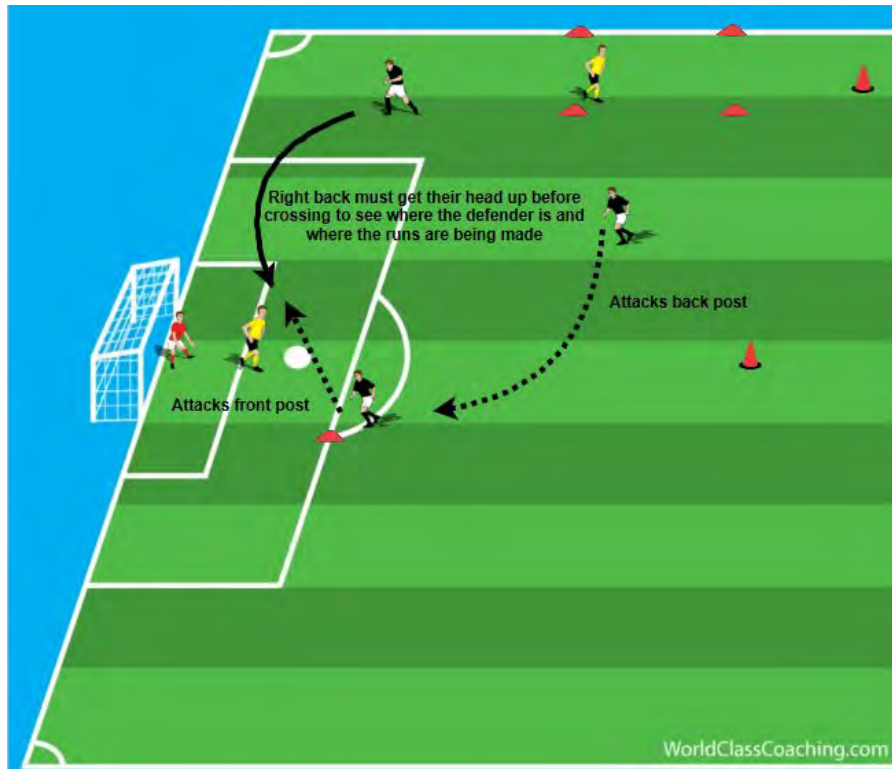


**Progression:**

To make this exercise more realistic you can add a defender in the 18 yard box who will now compete for the ball when it is crossed in (figure 5).



After the right back has made their overlapping run it is now even more important for that player to get their head up and see where the runs are being made and the positioning of the defender. By doing this, the cross can be aimed away from the defender and into the path of the attacker in the 18 yard box. Essentially, the exercise is set up in the same way with the same runs being made, but now with a little more pressure on the right back to deliver a good cross into the 18 yard box after their overlapping run (figure 6).



### Coaching points:

- At the start of the exercise, the attacker in the square must start to dribble a little in field in order to create space for the full back to overlap around the outside.
- The full back must get their head up when they are in a crossing position in order to see where the attackers are making their runs.
- The runs from the two attackers must be well timed. They must never be in a situation where they are standing still in the 18 yard box.
- The cue for the two attackers to make their sprint towards the front and back post is important. The full back will get their head up to see who they can cross the ball to in the box. Right after this, their head will go back down to look at the ball and cross it in, this is the cue for the attackers to sprint towards the front and back posts.
- After this exercise is progressed to having a defender in the 18 yard box, the full back crossing the ball must not only consider where the attackers are making their runs but also the defender's positioning. For example, if the defender starts to cover the front post attacker's run then the full back must recognize this and aim their cross towards the attacker at the back post.

This exercise can get all of the players working very hard as there is a lot of sprinting involved. A point can be given to the full back for every time that they are able to pick out one of the attackers with their cross regardless whether a goal is scored at the end of it or not. The full back can also earn extra points if a goal is scored from their cross. It is important that the full back is able to cross the ball in well even after they are tired from sprinting forward to make their overlapping run. Another good way to progress this exercise and to put more pressure on the full back to deliver a good cross into the 18 yard box, is by allowing the defender in the 10x10 square to recover and try to win the ball back once the full back dribbles out of the square.

## The First Touch Box - Agility, Control and One-Touch Passing

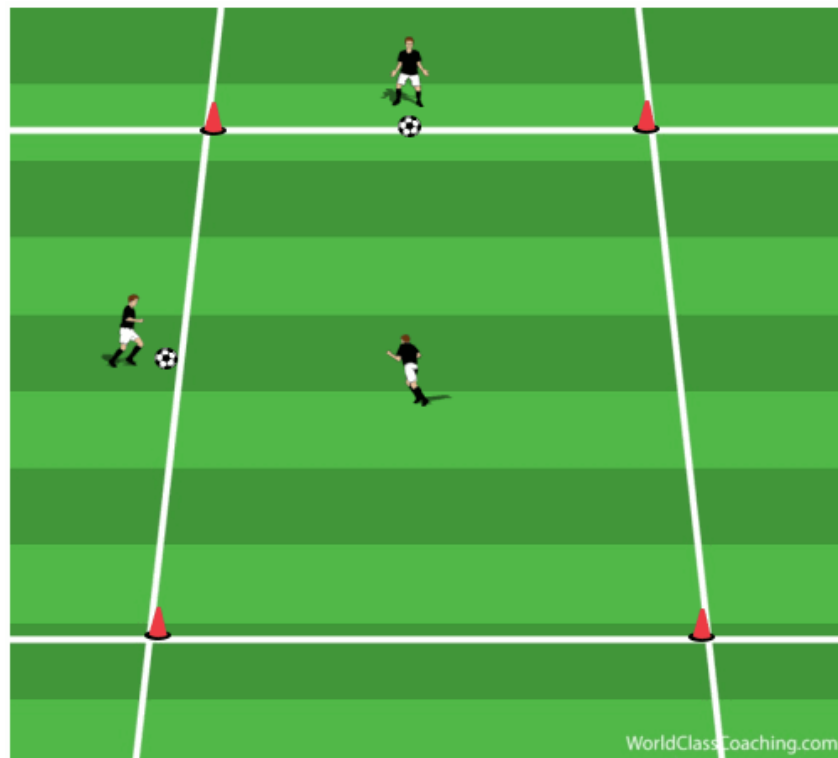
The first touch box is an exercise I love to use with all of my teams. With this exercise you can work on the players 1st touch from the air, on the ground, first time passing, volleying, heading, chest/thigh control – the possibilities are endless. Agility is a key aspect of the game that is developed thoroughly with this exercise due to the high tempo and constant changes of direction. It is also easy to add in competition to this exercise, having the players compete as teams, or against the players within their group, will only add to the intensity.

It can be used as either a Warm-Up or as the main Technical part of your session.

As there are so many aspects to this exercise; control, aerial control or first time passing/volleying, we can adjust accordingly to suit all age groups and levels. I will share some of these variations at the end of the article.

To start, you will need to divide your players into groups of 3. Two players will have a ball, one without. The two with the ball will stand on any two sides of the square. The third player will begin in the center of the square as shown below. I set up 4 of these squares all approx 5m x 5m, allowing 12 players to be involved at the same time – this number changes depending on the number of players in your practice.

### The First Touch Box – 1. Set Up.



### Here is how it works.

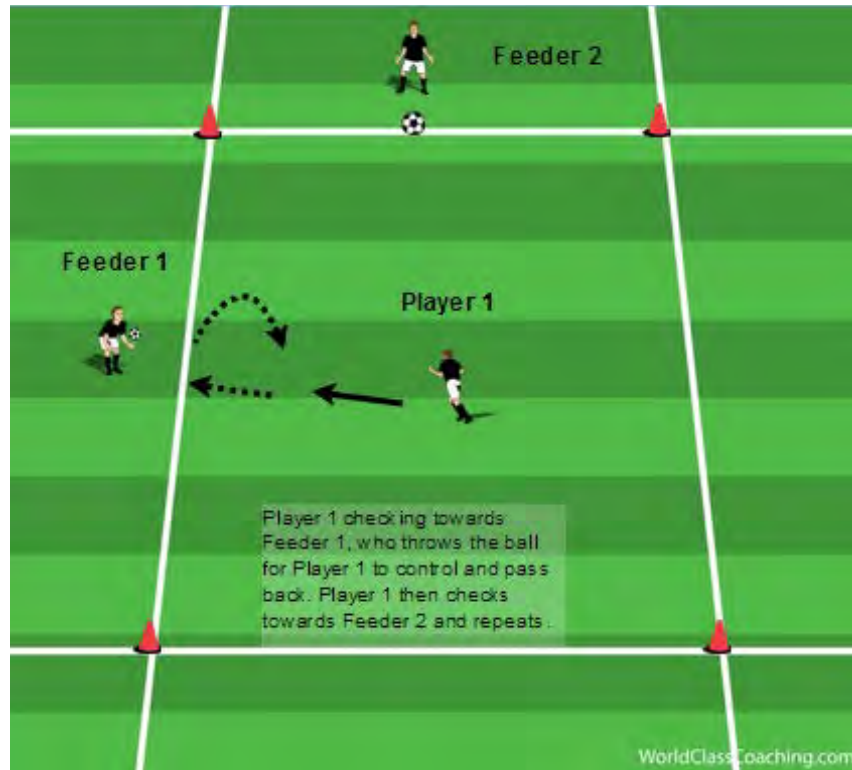
- The player MUST take two touches, no more-no less (regardless of height and pace of feed).
- One point is earned for every successful return to the feeder using two touches (control/volley OR control/pass).
- The winning player is the player in the square with the most points when time elapses.
- Time begins and ends on the coaches' call or whistle. I recommend anywhere between 45 seconds to 2 minutes, dependent on age and ability levels.
- The active player alternates between the two feeders, he cannot receive two passes in a row from the same feeder.

I like to ask the players to challenge their team mates, without being cruel. By this I mean that I like the feeders to make the active player move to receive the ball as opposed to throwing the ball straight to them at a comfortable height every time. I.e. throw the ball to them at awkward heights; bounce it in; play it slightly off center.

This will keep the player on their toes and work a more match-like situation, as of course, it is rare that the ball travels directly towards the player trying to control it – the majority of the time, the player has to move and adjust their feet in order to give themselves a chance of controlling the ball.

I like to add the rule that the player MUST take 2 touches, regardless of pace and height of the delivery. This rule forces the player to adjust their feet quickly in order to give them the best chance of getting the ball under control with the first touch, in order to pass back with their second touch.

The First Touch Box – 2. Player in action.



**Here are some of the variables:**

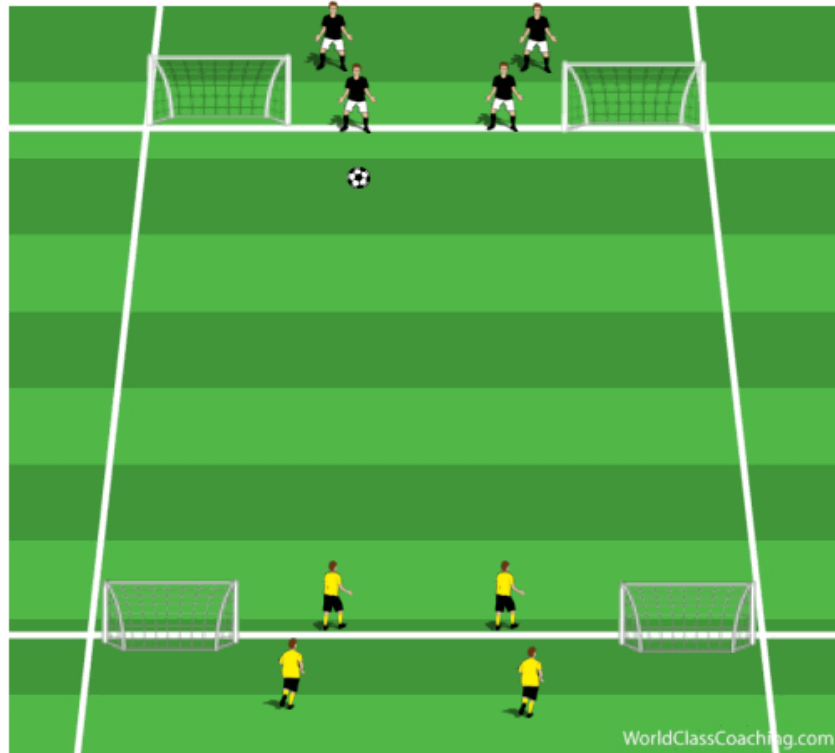
- The time each player spends in the center of the square.
- Type of competition - You could have a number of squares competing against each other, for example, which player can successfully complete the most passes or to toughen up that challenge, how many successful passes can they make consecutively (back to 0 each time they miss-control or misplace a pass). Or you could have the players in each group competing against one-another in the same way, highest consecutive successful passes, total number of successful passes completed etc.
- One Touch. I will often run a 'speed round' after working with the 2 touch rule. My speed round is simply 'One Touch Maximum' in which the player must return the ball back to the feeder with their first touch.
- Three Touches. If you put in a three touch compulsory rule, it could slow things down slightly BUT it will get the players controlling the ball closely before shifting the ball to one side and passing – technique that becomes very important in crowded areas of the field.
- Body Parts – you can be specific “this time you must use only thigh control before passing the ball back”. Being specific with which body parts you ask the players to use will emphasize the development of that particular technique.
- You can also ask the feeders to move up and down the line of their square. This will mean the active player receives the ball on a different angle each time it is played in.
- The final variable is the size of the box. I use 5m x 5m squares. This allows for quick changes of direction and lot's of first touches. A bigger area would allow for more running, less agility and less touches on the ball. If it's the running/cardio you want to add....make the square bigger!

## Continuous 2v2 with Four Goals

This week's exercise is designed to help build better aerobic and anaerobic endurance. It involves short sprints, quick changes of direction, recovery defending and also helps to develop a better focus and awareness. The exercise is played at a very high tempo with the players rotating each time the ball goes dead (goal, turnover in possession, ball out of bounds).

### Set Up and Directions

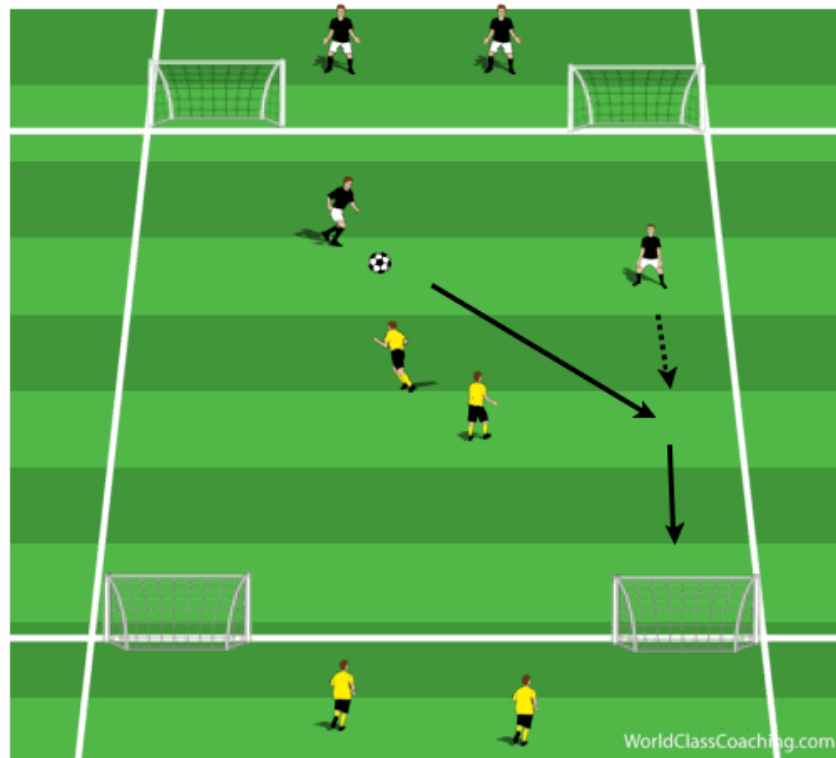
For this exercise you will need 4 goals, a set of soccer balls and a minimum of 8 players divided into 2 teams. Mark out a 20x20 meter area. Set up is shown below (Fig 1).



Ensure each team has a good supply of soccer balls; this will help to keep the rotation fast and intensity high. One point is scored for each goal; with the winning team being offered a reward (providing motivation is very important for good intensity and work rate during practice). For this particular exercise, I will often carry the score over to the scrimmage – providing players with a chance to start the scrimmage with a lead.

Play begins when one of the attacking players dribbles the ball onto the field, the defenders may enter the field as soon as the attacker does so. The attackers must try to score in either goal on the opposite side of the field to which they start. The defenders must try to stop them from scoring by winning the ball from them.

Below we see the attacking player making a pass to his open team mate and a shot on goal (Fig 2.)

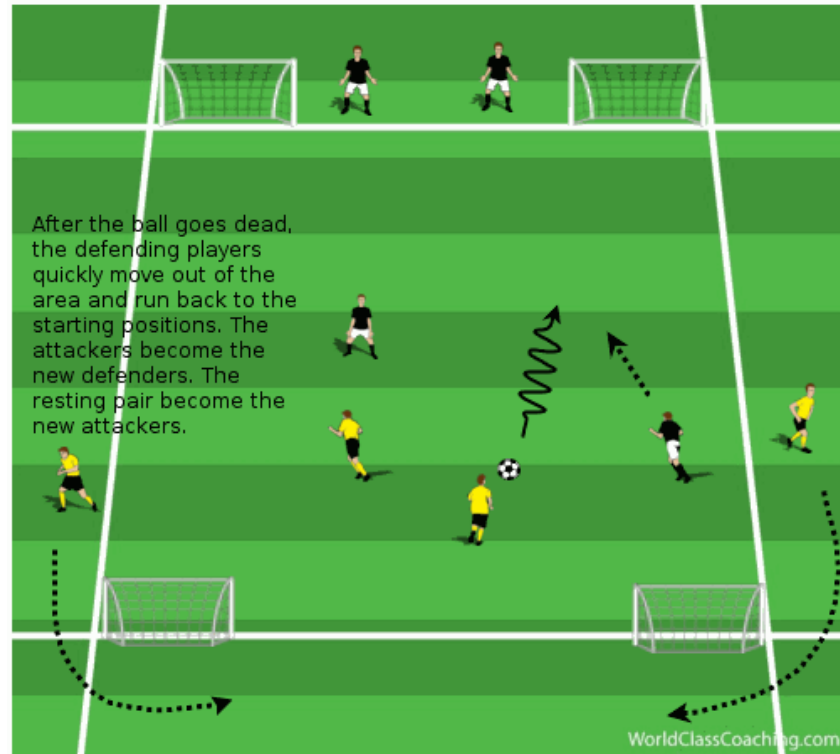


**The play is over when:**

- The attacking team scores
- The ball goes out of bounds
- The defending team steals the ball

As soon as the ball goes dead, the players that were defending move off the field as quickly as possible, the attacking players become the new defending players and the players resting on the original defenders side of the field, become the new attackers – as shown below (Fig 3).





This rotation is continuous. I often put a time limit on the game in order to keep the intensity and work rate. I recommend 3 minute games with 1 minute rest.

A key factor of this exercise is the transition from attack to defense. The players must be alert to this switch from the instant their attack ends. Encourage the pair waiting to attack, that they should start very fast in order to try and catch the defenders out.

### **Progression – Counter Attacking**

Now, when the pair that starts as the defenders steals the ball, instead of the play being over, they now have a chance to counter-attack and score themselves. This allows for a more game-like, continuous play, as opposed to short, fast attacks.



The transition remains the same, with the attacking team becoming the defenders, the defenders rest and a new pair will come in to attack. Just remember who started the play, as now either team can score!

### **Two or Four goals?**

I use four goals for this exercise as this requires the players to develop their awareness. With two goals to defend and two to attack, you have much more to think about whatever your role on the field.

As defenders, if you do not understand your surroundings (i.e. exactly where the goal is that you're defending, where the player is that is running off the ball) then you may make the attackers' job easier. As attackers, it is important to have a good awareness of your surroundings in order to give yourself the best chance to shoot and to take advantage of any poor defensive positioning.

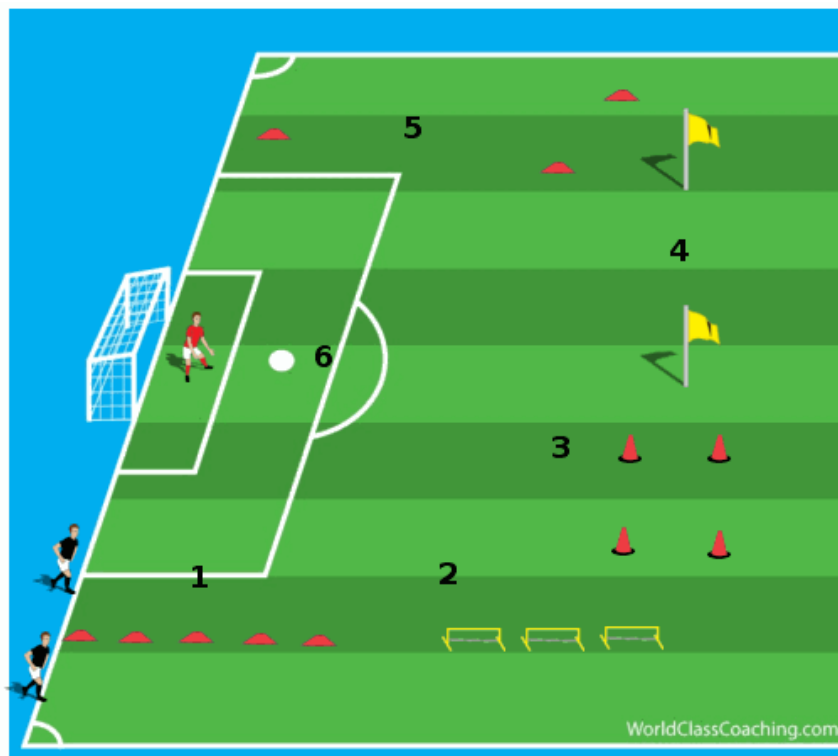
Using two goals is just as fast paced and still very exciting.

## Paired Technical and Conditioning Circuit, with Finishing

This exercise focuses on many key aspects of the game; first time passing, the volley pass, shielding the ball, aerial control, through balls and crossing and finishing. You can also incorporate your goalkeeper(s) into this practice very easily.

Before starting, ensure the players are thoroughly warmed up as this is a high tempo, continuous exercise.

I like to set the team targets to reach during this exercise (goals scored; successful passes; total number of circuits within the time etc). Or I may reward the 'best performing pair' with the captaincy for the scrimmage – something they will feel proud of.



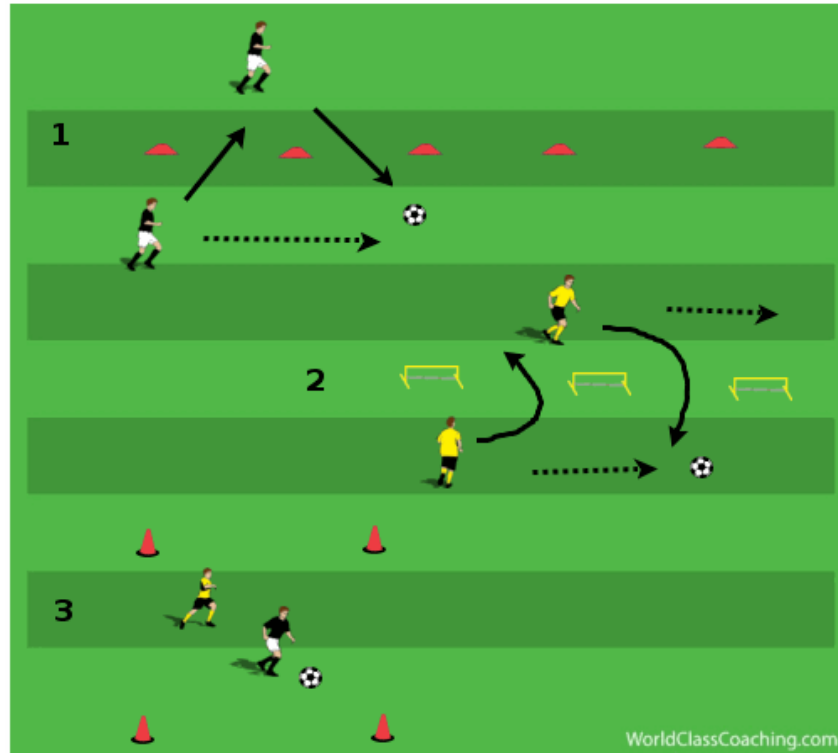
### Set-Up and Directions

Set up the six stations as shown in the diagram (station 6 uses the Penalty box, goal and a goalkeeper – no cones needed). Stations 2 and 4 can also be set up using cones.

The players will start in two lines, approx' 3 meters from either side of station one (as shown below). The players will stay in their pairs and progress around the circuit completing each station, finishing with a cross and finishing combination. Once one player has taken a shot, the pair must collect the ball and repeat the circuit with reversed roles. The exercise will continue for three minutes before allowing a rest.

Encourage the players to push themselves and work at a fast tempo.

Stations 1, 2 and 3 are shown in action below (Fig 2).



### Station 1 – One Touch Passing

Lay out five-eight cones approx 2 meters apart in a straight line. The players pass the ball through each gate with their first touch. The players must progress through each gate with every pass – cannot go through the same gate twice. They must also keep a distance of 3-5 meters from the cones.

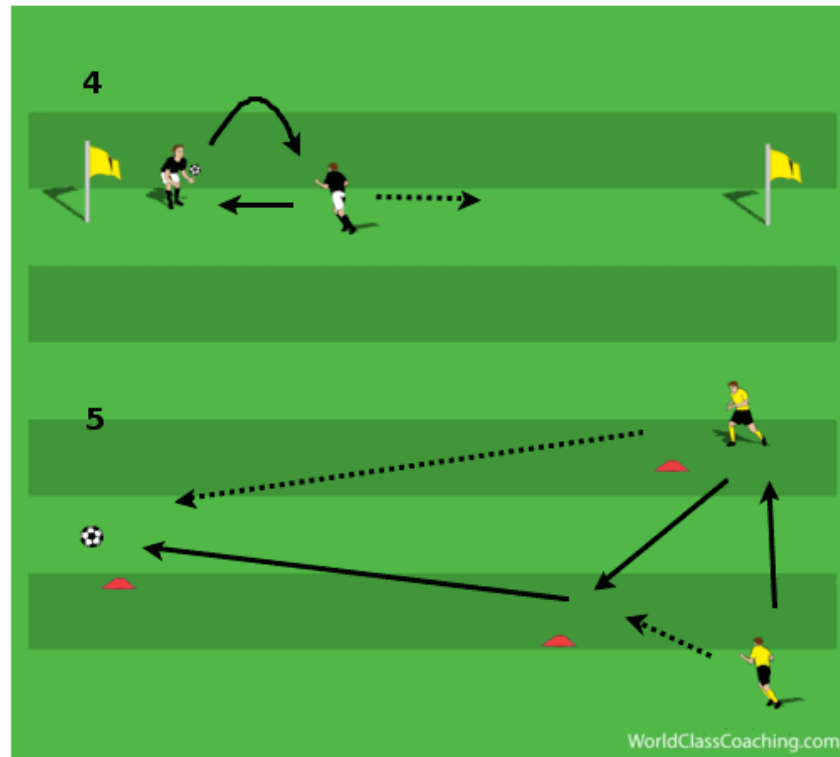
### Station 2 – Soccer Tennis

You can use hurdles or tall cones to mark out the ‘net’. Players can take a maximum of two touches at a time to lift the ball over the net to their partner. Players will aim to get the ball over the net three times each, completing six aerial passes before moving to the next station.

### Station 3 - 1v1 Shielding the Ball

Mark out a square 5x5 meters. Whichever player received the last pass on station 2 then dribbles into station 3. The player without the ball then enters and has eight seconds to win the ball from the possessing player. The player with the ball uses his/her body to shield and protect the ball whilst keeping the ball under control. After eight seconds, or when possession changes, move on to station 4.

Stations 4 and 5 are shown in action below (Fig 3).



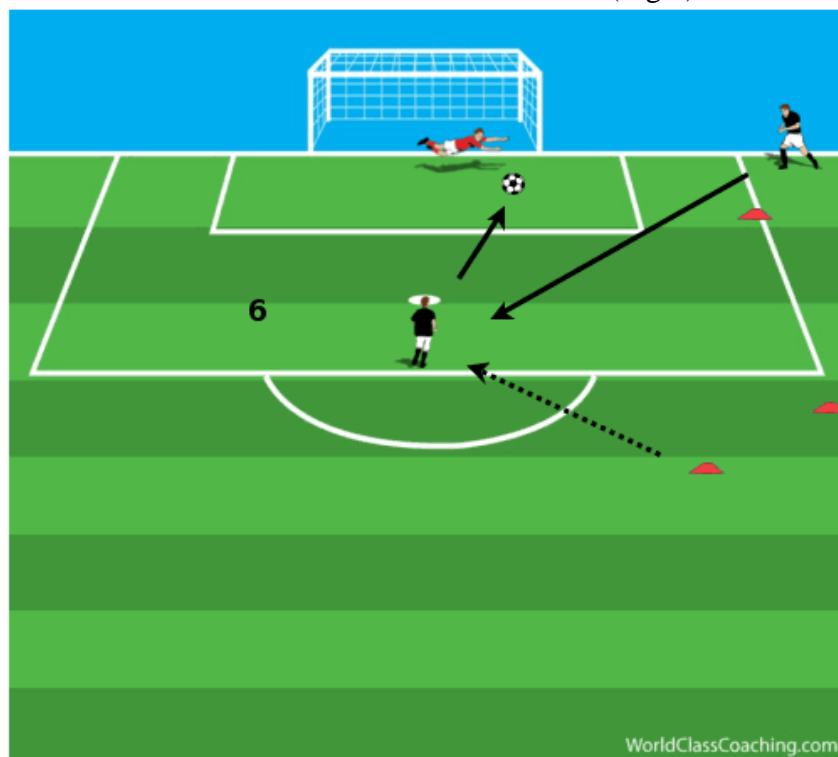
#### Station 4 – First time Volleys

Set up two flags/cones marking out a distance of 20 meters. Whichever player has possession from station 3 then picks up the ball. The players then face each other around 3 meters apart. The feeder throws the ball for his/her partner to volley back with their first touch. After each volley, the feeder moves forward and the receiver move back. This process is repeated for ten or so volleys, until the players complete 20 meters.

#### Station 5 – Give and Go

Now the players perform a give and go. The player with the ball after station 4 will pass the ball to the opposite players feet who returns the ball to the space just in front of the first player. The second player then makes a run towards the cone near to the end of the field. The first player then plays a longer pass into space towards the cone near the end of the field for the second player to run on to.

**Station 6** is shown in action below (Fig 4).



### **Station 6 – Cross and Finish**

Player one from Station 5 makes a run towards the edge of the penalty box after playing the pass to the end of the field. Player two collects the pass, takes a touch to get the ball out of his/her feet and then plays a low, hard cross into the space just in front of the striker. The striker must score with only one touch.

#### **Variations**

**Station 1** – Pass using the outside of the foot (quicker) // Control and then pass.

**Station 2** – Vary the number of touches for each player.

**Station 3** – 1v1 box. The player with the ball has to beat the defender and reach the opposite side of the box.

**Station 4** – Different heights of the feed e.g. Thigh control and volley; Headers; Chest and Pass etc.

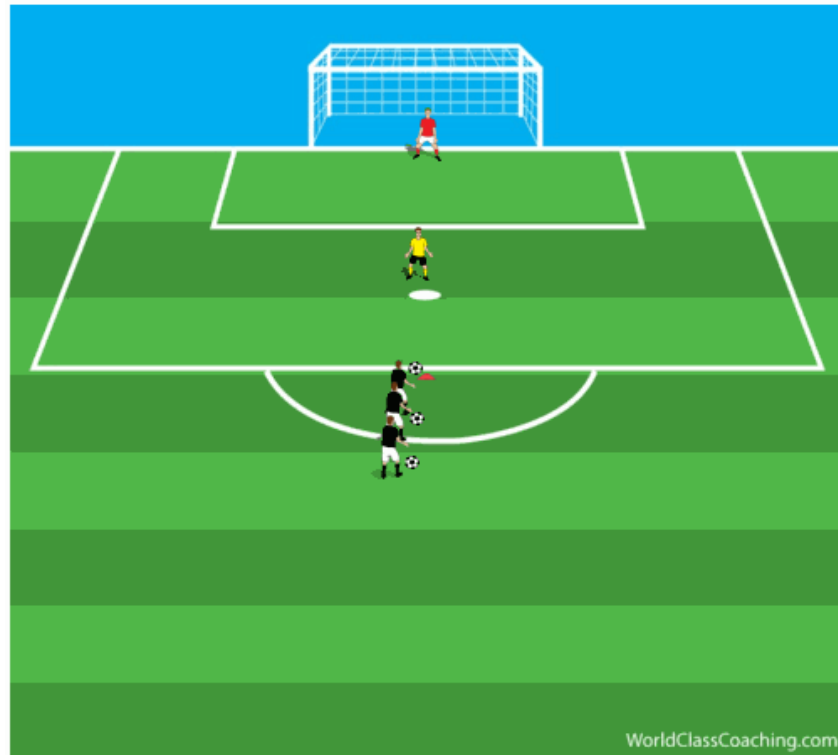
**Station 5** – You could vary the pattern in which they pass the ball

**Station 6** – Aerial Cross // Two or even three touches for the attacker.

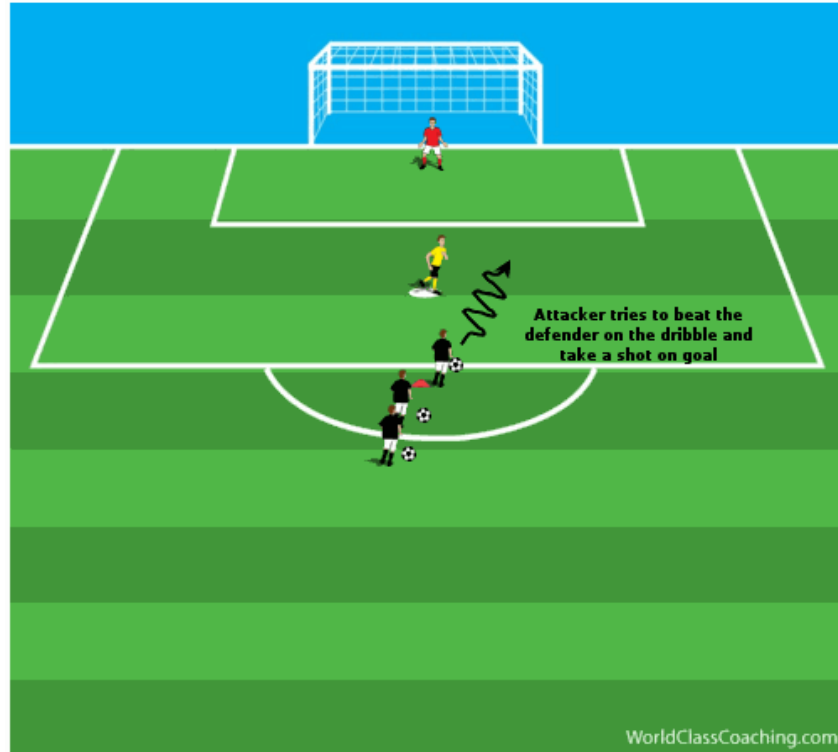
## Working on Anaerobic Fitness in a 1v1 Situation

This is a great way to get your players working hard in a 1v1 situation and you can set this up a number of times using small groups to keep your players active throughout the exercise.

The exercise starts just outside the 18 yard box with an attacker, defender and goalkeeper as shown below in figure 1.



The attacker will go 1v1 against the defender who is stood around the penalty spot. The aim for the attacker is to beat the defender with a dribble and take a shot on goal (figure 2).



As soon as the attacker has taken their shot on goal, they become a defender. The next player waiting in line attacks the space and dribbles through towards goal to take a shot. The new defender must recover from the position where they had taken their shot and try to stop the new attacker from scoring (figure 3).





The aim is for this exercise is that it be as fast paced and continuous as possible. As soon as a shot is taken, the next attacker in line must dribble into the space quickly to make the new defender have to work hard to recover and stop a goal being scored. When done at this speed it is a great work out for the players and very fun as they will be taking many shots on goal. To add an incentive for the players, you can award points for the attackers when they score a goal and points for the defender every time they tackle the attacker or block a shot and so stopping a goal being scored.

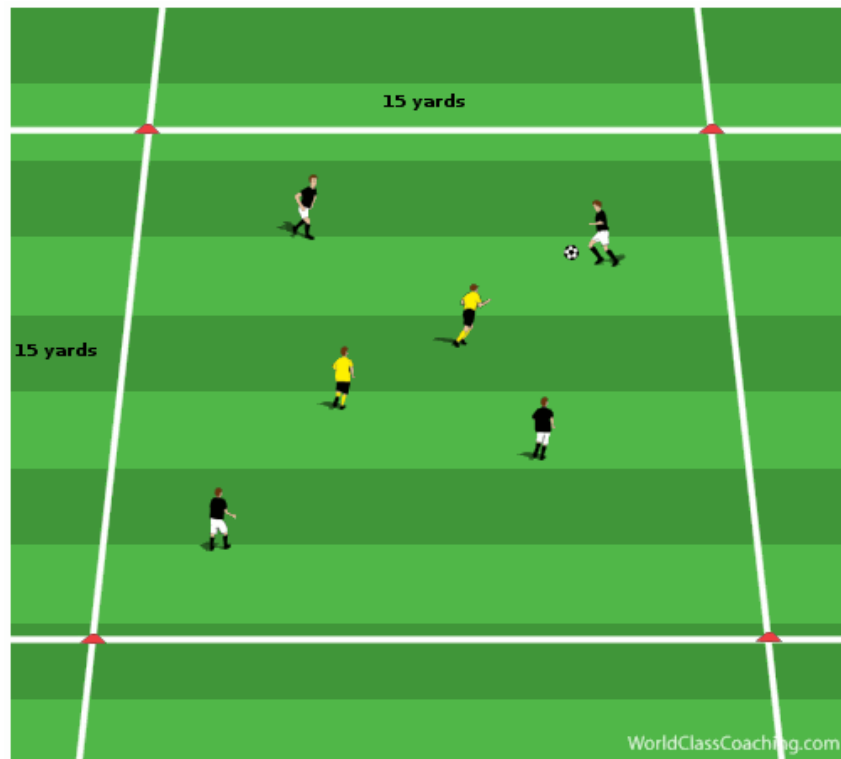
### **Variations**

This exercise can also be done with different numbers. It can be done with 2v2s or 3v3s and the same idea applies, as soon as the attacking 2 or 3 have taken their shot on goal, they become defenders straight away. Again, it is very important that as soon as a shot it taken, the attackers waiting in line attack goal straight away.

## Winning the Ball Back Quickly and Working on Conditioning

If you like to have your team play a high pressure game and win the ball back quickly when they lose it, then this is a great way to develop this. Playing a high pressure game can be very successful during games but must be worked on regularly during practices to ensure that the players are physically conditioned to be able carry this tactic out.

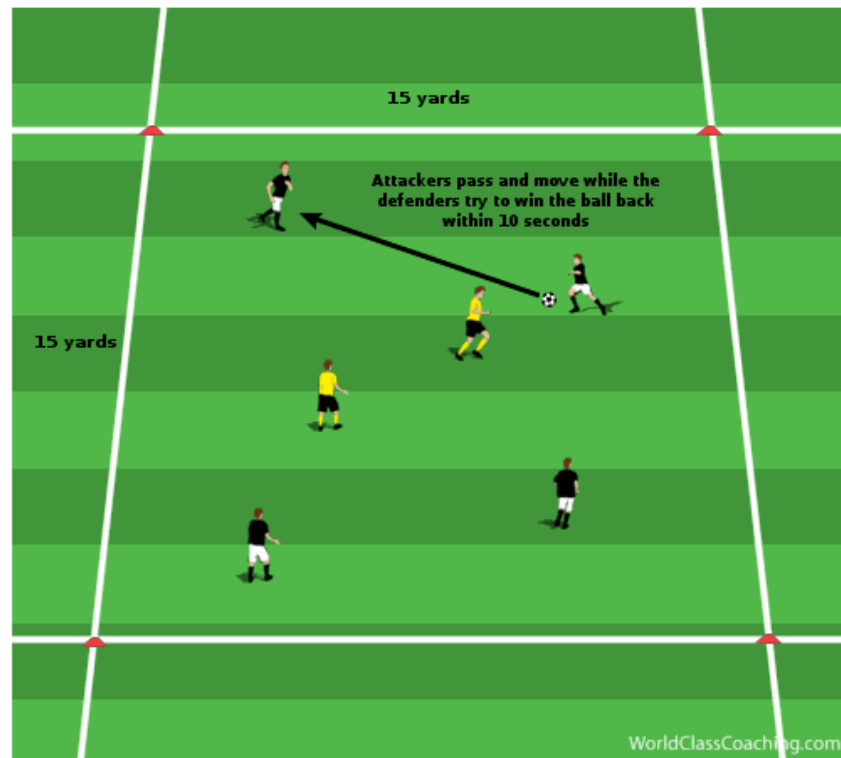
The exercise starts with four attackers and two defenders in a 15x15 yards square as shown below in figure 1.



The four attackers try to keep the ball away from the two defenders who have 10 seconds to try and win the ball back (figure 2). If the attackers keep the ball for 10 seconds then they are awarded a point and if the defenders win the ball within 10 seconds then they earn themselves a point. The aim is that the defenders work together to pressure the ball and either win the ball back or force the ball out of the square. As the defenders are in a numbers down situation, they must work very hard to win possession of the ball and it is this work ethic that is needed to win the ball back in a real game situation.

This is a great way to develop the understanding that the ball must be won back as quickly as possible in order to avoid an attack against your team. You can increase the pressure on the defenders by reducing the time that they have to win the ball back. You can also change the situation slightly so that the defenders start with the ball. It will be difficult for them to keep the ball for long as they will be heavily outnumbered. However, when the defenders lose the ball, the

timer starts and they must win the ball back within 10 seconds. This is a good development as it emphasizes the fact that the ball must be won back quickly when lost.

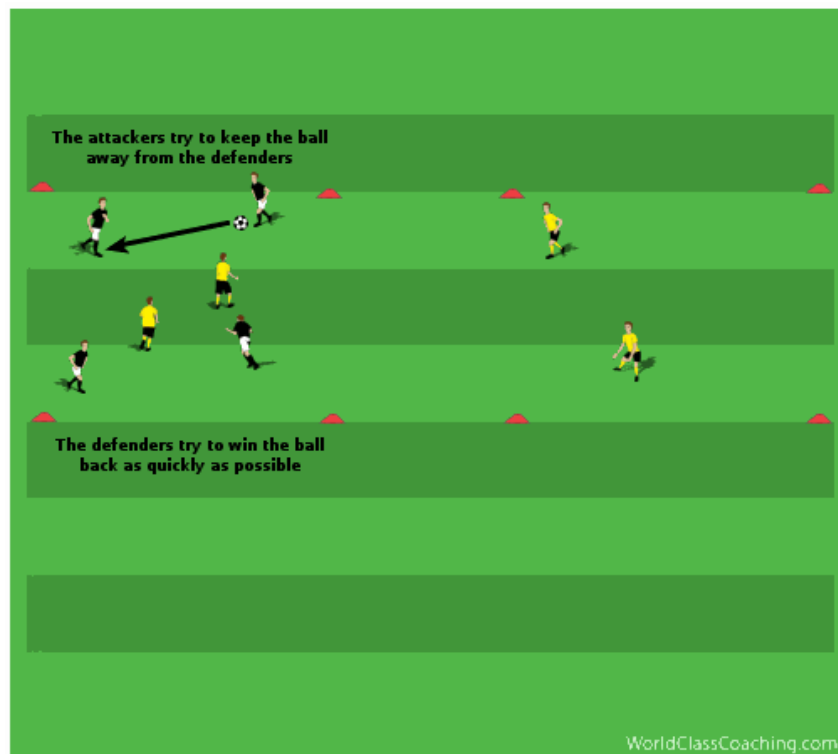


**Progression:**

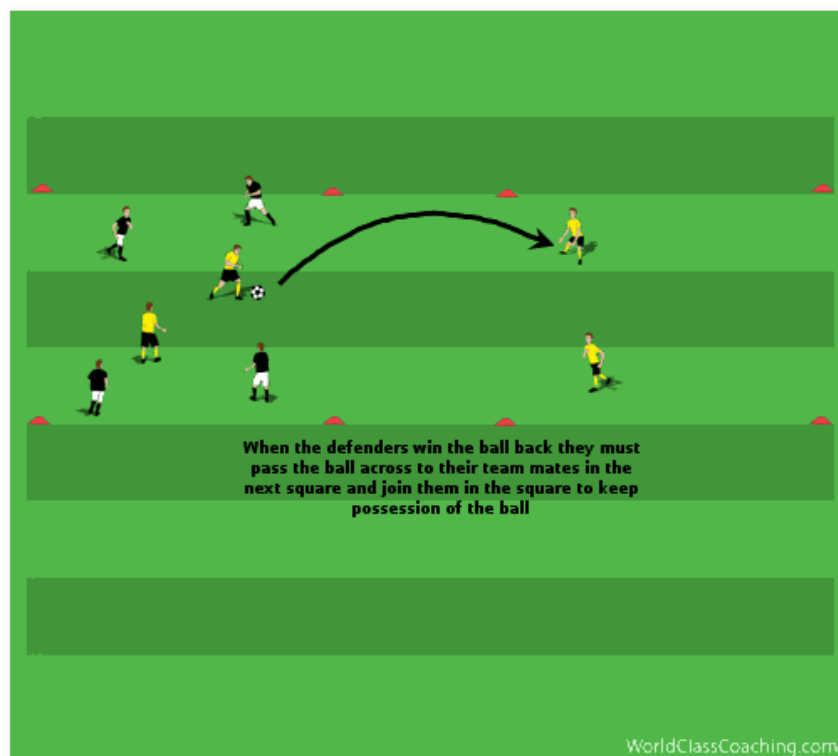
You can progress this exercise to include the transition from defence to attack and so making it more game realistic. There are now two 15x15 squares with a 10 yard gap between them as shown below. One square will start with a 4v2 like the previous part of the exercise and the second square will contain two players who are on the same team as the two defenders in the first square (figure 3).



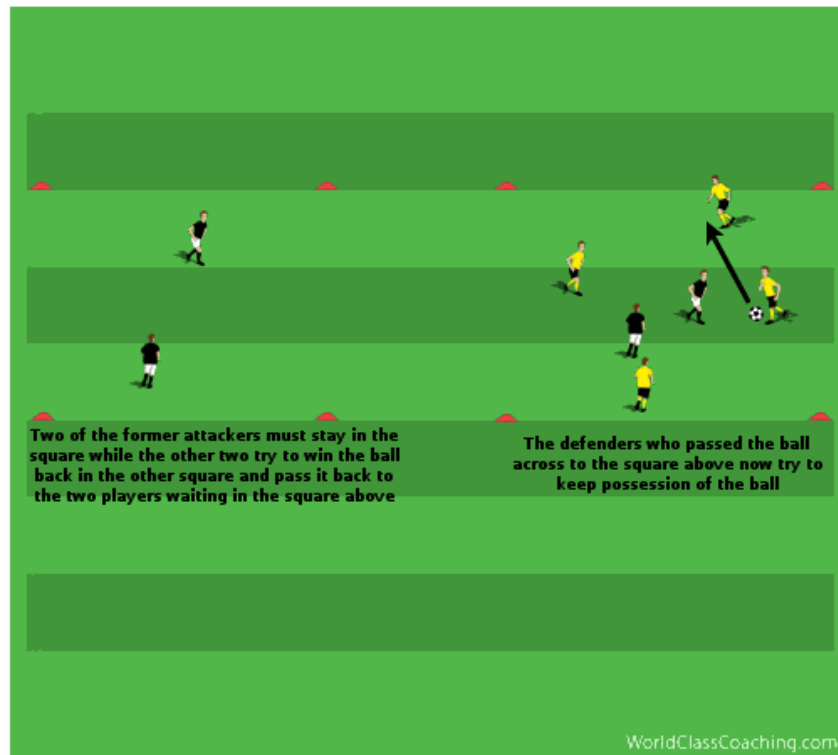
The four attackers keep the ball away from the two defenders, who try to win the ball back as quickly as possible. Though the time limit for the defenders to win the ball is no longer in force, it is important to keep emphasizing winning possession of the ball quickly to the defenders (in a real game situation, it will result in the attacking team not be able to construct an attack). The attackers get a point for every time they reach 10 passes without the defenders winning the ball (figure 4).



When the defenders win the ball from the attackers, they must pass it across to their two team mates waiting in the other square, which earns their team a point (figure 5). As soon as they have passed the ball across, they must join their team mates in the square and keep possession of the ball.



Two of the players from the team that just lost the ball will now sprint across to the other square to try and win the ball back from the new attackers (figure 6). If they win the ball back, then they pass the ball back to their team mates waiting in the original square.



When you are coaching this exercise, make sure that you have plenty of soccer balls with you so that if the ball goes out of play, you can restart the game again quickly. This will keep the intensity high and work on the player's anaerobic conditioning.

### Coaching Points:

- The defenders must work hard to win the ball back, applying pressure on the ball as quickly as possible to force the attackers into a mistake.
- Once the defenders win the ball, they must keep their composure and get their head up to see where their team mates are in the other square. This will enable them to make a good pass to their team mate. The idea is that when you have worked so hard to win the ball back, that you do not waste the possession with a poor pass.
- In the transition between defence and attack, the players must sprint as fast as they can to the next square to support their team mates and provide them with extra options to pass to.
- In the transition between attack and defence, two players from the team that just lost the ball must sprint across to pressure the team in possession. This quick pressure is what will hopefully result in winning the ball back quickly.

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